

This 'Pad Man' bats for reusable pads, cautions against unsafe incinerators

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Pune: Omkar Sathe appreciates Akshay Kumar-starrer "Pad Man" for propagating the use of sanitary pads and trying to remove the stigma around menstruation, but his organization, Allforasmile, takes a slightly different route to derive the same result.

The organization Sathe heads is staffed mainly by women. It manufactures low-cost and reusable cloth sanitary pads. Allforasmile started off as a skill-inculcating venture, aiming to train women in stitching as a means of earning a livelihood. Initially, manufacturing sanitary pads was a secondary project.

"We started in 2010 with stitching as the core skill area. Later, some people approached us because they wanted cotton

“The pads that we sell and distribute are made entirely of cloth. They are reusable and can be used for years unlike synthetic pads that are very polluting to the soil and water. There are also many misconceptions about cloth pads. If the cloth pad is washed and dried properly, there is no risk

— Omkar Sathe



pads. So, we started manufacturing cloth sanitary pads. The pads were circulated in select areas of the city, like Janwadi slums, during the trial run," said Sathe, who would deliver a lecture about his venture as a part of the Kirloskar Vasundhara International Film Festival (KVIFF).

Women unable to afford commercially-made sanitary

pads often use discarded cloth and thus, suffer from a variety of infections. However, Sathe said the manner in which cloth is used is often the line between hygiene and the lack of it.

"The pads that we sell and distribute are made entirely of cloth. They are reusable and can be used for years unlike synthetic pads that are very polluting to the soil and water. There are

also many misconceptions about cloth pads, like the difficulty in washing them or the use of cloth being unhygienic. If the cloth pad is washed and dried properly, there is no risk," he said, addressing a news conference about the venture.

Sathe also warned against the "trend" of schools and colleges setting up incinerators for used sanitary pads, claiming that many do not follow the World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines.

"The WHO actually has a wide set of rules and guidelines, which must be followed while setting up such incinerators. It is clearly mentioned there that if the pads are incinerated at low temperatures, there is a huge risk of carcinogenic emissions. Most products in the market do not follow those regulations," he said.