

ChhaupadiPratha: Status of political and social Behaviour

Dr. Ishwori prasad kandel

Associate professor Central Department of Political science.

Corresponding Author: Dr. Ishwori prasad kandel

Abstract: ‘ChhaupadiPratha’ is in the Karnali and far-western states of Nepal. It’s a kind of a cultural practice that violates the rights of women and girls. Especially, Women and girls during their menstruation periods are forced to live in a menstruation shed, cowshed or in tiny rooms until their periods are over. Besides the isolation from family and society, menstruating women and girls are also restricted from participating in day-to-day activities such as using communal water resources, touching male members and engaging in any religious or social gathering, cooking, and taking baths. In this paper, it explores the impacts of ChhaupadiPratha on the health of women and girls during their menstruation period and examines the root causes of the serious discriminatory practice against women and girls and why ChhaupadiPratha continues even if it has been declared illegal by the government of Nepal and it provides policy recommendations to eradicate the ChhaupadiPratha in the far-western and Karnali states. ChhaupadiPratha is reinforced as the gender inequality interacts with poverty and low education of people. It is a serious form of discrimination against women and girls, which is deeply embedded in the patriarchal Hindu culture and the caste-based hierarchy of Nepalese society. Also, this paper addresses that much of the government’s efforts to eradicate ChhaupadiPratha have been in vain mainly with the reasons. First, insufficient budget to implement designed Chhaupadi eradication programs. Secondly, lack of programs targeting the elimination of root-causes of the practice. Thirdly, difficulty in monitoring the eradication projects/programs in affected areas due to the poor transportation in the country and lastly, lack of participation of community members including women and girls, local community leaders, and religious leaders and impunity. There are different kinds of gender-based violence existing in Nepal including domestic violence, physical violence, sexual violence, social and cultural violence. Isolating women during their menstrual cycle for 4 to 5 days and during the postnatal period for 11 days called ‘ChhaupadiPratha’ is one of the widespread cultural violence against women and girls in Nepal.

Key Words: Chhaupadi: ChhaupadiPratha is a social practice of Nepal for Hindu women, which forbids a woman from participating in normal family activities during menstruation period because they are considered impure.

Date of Submission: 16-08-2019

Date of Acceptance: 31-08-2019

Menstruation: It is defined as a monthly period in which blood derived from the uterus passes through the vagina (UNICEF India, 2008). It is the symbol of the beginning of womanhood, which starts around the adolescent age of females and a key sign of reproductive health and a way of organizing for pregnancy.

Statement of the Problem

ChhaupadiPratha is reinforced as the gender inequality interacts with poverty and low education of people. The paper addresses that much of the government’s efforts to eradicate this system. It analyzes how ChhaupadiPratha affects women and girls’ life and why they are following this practice even though it is harmful and banned by the government. This research focused on to find out answer of these questions.

- a. Why is ChhaupadiPratha still existence in Nepal?
- b. How does the ‘ChhaupadiPratha’ affect on Nepalese society and What are the problems being faced by women and girls during the menstruation ?

Objective of the Study

The specific objectives are as follows:

- a. To find out the root causes of ChhaupadiPratha.
- b. To identify the health, education and others social problem faced by women and girls during the menstrual period.

Methodology

The study should be based on qualitative research for finding out the perception; attitude and practices towards menstruation of community people those who followed as a custom in the society. And also focus to find out the difficulties faced by women and girls as a qualitative way. This papers based on descriptive and explanatory method of research design for finding how menstrual discrimination affects women and girls in their lives and describe the beliefs and attitude towards the menstruation according to socio-cultural and religious perspectives. In this study area, there are most of women and girls who are affected from “ChhaupadiPratha”. The sample size has been selected among affected women and girls on the basis of judgemental sampling procedure according to the situation of menstruating discrimination in the study area.

I. INTRODUCTION

In Hindu culture, women are not allowed to touch men, enter the kitchen, and participate in any social gatherings and religious functions; in Islam, women are banned from praying, fasting and having physical relationship; in Jewish culture, women are not allowed to touch anything and anybody while they are having their menstruation period (Bhartiya, 2013 : 532-524).According to the belief, if a menstruating woman touches a man, he will be ill; if she consumes milk and milk products, the cow will stop giving milk; if she touches trees and ripe fruits, they will never bear fruits again or will always be rotten out. If someone goes against these beliefs, then Deauta (God) will be angry and do something wrong in their family (UNRHCO, 2011 : 2). Moreover, in some communities of far western and Karnali Pradeshes of Nepal, girls are prohibited from attending their schools during their menstruation period as school is considered a holy place (Hamal and K.C.,2014 : 32). It is a widespread belief that during the menstruation period, women and girls are considered impure and untouchable human beings. They are forced to stay in a cowshed or in a poorly constructed hut¹ called ‘Chhaupadi hut’ or ‘Chhaupadi Gotha’. They stayed inside the hut without the warm woolen blanket and proper sanitation facilities for different durations i.e. thirteen days during their first menstruation, seven days in second and third menstruation and thereafter four days in each period. Moreover, this practice is applied to pregnant women after childbirth for eleven days and kept in such shed for the first eleven days (Crawford and Kaufman,2014 : 10). Dalit caste is treated as untouchable permanently in the society whereas women are treated as such only during their menstruation temporarily (Joshi,2015:30).The disparity between castes, class, and gender is high in those states. Hindu social class has classified all human beings into four hierarchies such as Brahmin, Chhettri, Vaishya, and Shudra. Among them, the last group ‘Shudra’ is considered as untouchable caste and the people classified under this caste are called Dalit (Tuladar, 2012 : 5).

The word ‘Chhaupadi’ is the combination of ‘Chhau’ and ‘Padi’, which means menstruation and woman respectively. In ChhaupadiPratha, women and girls who are menstruating are restricted from their daily household chores, prohibited to enter in the kitchen, touch animate and non-animate things, access the family toilet and water as well as participate in social gathering and religious ceremonies. They are also restricted to consume nutritious food such as milk and milk products, green vegetables, and meat (Adhikari, 2007 : 382).However, it is still a taboo in the 21st century in many parts of the world. Menstruation taboo is different from community to community and religion-to-religion. Menstruation is a normal universal phenomena (Ozdemir, 2013 : 259) and biological process for female (Ranabhat, 2015 : 786). Due to the geographical and developmental challenges, more than half of the populations are illiterate and the unemployment rate is higher than other parts of Nepal. People of those regions have limited access to the basic government’s services such as transportation, electricity, drinking water, health care, and school consumption (CBS, 2011). However, they all are discriminated based on the same principle of pollution and purity of caste and gender. The origin of Chhaupadi practice is based on caste, relationship between Dalit caste and non-Dalit caste (so-called upper caste) because menstruating women and girls are treated as untouchable in the family and society as Dalit caste. Therefore, the caste based inequality and religious beliefs emphasize to follow ChhaupadiPratha in those regions (Amgain, 2011 : 3).

According to the Nepal Adolescent and Youth Survey conducted in 2011, “in Nepalese community, around 70% of the girls stayed in the separate dark room and 4% stayed in a shed far from the house during their menstruation period. 30% of young girls stayed in a separate room not being allowed to touch until the purification takes place in about a week or so” (MOHP, 2012 : 97). Another survey shows that “58% of girls were not allowed to cook during the menstruation period; 55% were not allowed to perform household chores; 41% were not allowed to attend religious function; 25% were not allowed to touch a male person; and 16% were kept away far from outside in a shed or in a corner of a room” (Sapkota, 2013 : 125). Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey conducted in 2014, women and girls were discriminated during the menstruation period and faced by different forms of discriminatory practices in Nepal. Among of these discriminatory practices, 25% of women and girls stayed in separate tiny rooms inside their residential house; 2.7% of them stayed in animal

sheds; 2.9% stayed in menstruation hut; 8.8% had to bath in separate places; 2.3% of girls were absent from the school; 2.8% were forced to eat separate food; and 57.6% had to avoid social gathering during the menstruation period. This practice is existing in all over the country in Hindu culture in different forms but mostly prevalent in far western Karnali states where 71% of women and girls were forced to practice ChhaupadiPratha (UNICEF, 2015 : 150). ChhaupadiPratha deprives women and girls of their basic human rights, such as the right to health, the right to education, the right to security, the right of freedom and reproductive health, etc. In addition, women and girls are not allowed to live in the healthy and hygienic environment, eat nutritious food and move to any places according to their own wills and necessity. Women are discriminated against with respect to opportunities. Women are discriminated against with respect to opportunities, 100 countries Prevented from pursuing some careers only because of their gender. More than 150 countries Legally discriminated.

Health of Women

Menstruation is the common phenomenon but in some communities of some countries, women are facing different health problems and death incident due to lack of information about menstruation process and gender discriminatory social norms and superstitious beliefs (Ahmen and Yesman, 2008 : 285). There are serious discriminatory practices against women during the menstruation period wherein women must be kept in a small shed, often where animals are kept at other times. This harmful custom still exists in Nepal and some other Asian, African and South American cultures, which is known as ChhaupadiPratha in Nepal. This practice negatively affects on health, will power, thoughts and dignity of women and girls and also seriously hurts on the health of young children needing mothers' (Shrestha, 2013 : 18).

The report of World Vision Zambia's Water Sanitation and Hygiene Program indicate that community-based traditional beliefs, perception, and knowledge are barriers for Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHP) in Zambia. That is the major issues of women and girls for getting health care and education. Even though the community leaders have acquired the knowledge about the reproductive health of women, particularly about the menstruation cycle, they hesitate to implement changes to this in practice because they fear about being criticized by the conservative group in the society. Even the educated women are frightened of being targeted by the religious group (World Vision, International, 2014 : 5-6). A study concluded that cultural belief of Kenya did not get allow to talk openly about menstruation process that is why the majority of girls are forced to use unclean and insecure items due to lack of awareness among the girls and women. Moreover, the poor families were not able to buy the sanitary pad for the girls and women. Even in school, students are not able to raise their health concern to their teachers and health workers towards menstruation problem. Poor Menstrual Health Management knowledge and traditional religious cultural beliefs and low-income lead to unhygienic menstrual practices that violate women and girls rights to get access health care (Water Aid 2009). That is why; it is needed to provide information about biological menstruation rather than cultural, religious faith for reducing the effect on their sexual and reproductive health. The impact of Chhaupadi on women's health is obviously shocking. Five days in every month, they should stay in a dark, dirty hut without any warm blanket and nutritious food in adequate amounts. Due to the lack of security, every year some women are raped and killed by the attack of wild animal and the snake bites.

Education of Women

A study concluded that the impact of menstruation on the girl's absenteeism and poor performances in school (Wilson and Boosey, 2013 : 31). Another study found that 53% in Nepal, 90% in Malawi, 50.2% in Kenya girls are missing their school during the menstruation period (Pillitteri, 2011; Water Aid, 2009). Another report also shows that around 23% of girls aged 12-18 missed school an average of five days during the menstruation period in a month in Nepal (Jameel, 2011). The main cause of this absenteeism is the lack of menstrual things, lack of adequate sanitary facilities in school and menstrual ache (Patkar 2005 ; Piliitteri, 2011). This type of absenteeism is hurtful for the girl that affects their quality education (Kanyike et al. 2005 ; Water Aid 2005 : 9 cited by Wilson and Boosey 2013 : 13).

Table 1: Education status -wise discriminatory form

Education status	Percent of women who experience different forms of Chhaupadi						
	Stay in Chhaupadi hut	Stay in animal shed	Eat different food	Absent from school/ work	Stay in Different room of home	Bathe in separate place	Avoid social gatherings
Illiterate	4.1	3.9	3.0	1.6	21.8	10.8	60.5
Primary level	2.5	2.4	1.9	2.0	27.1	8.9	56.2
Secondary level	2.7	2.4	3.0	2.7	27.4	8.9	56.5
Higher	1.2	1.0	2.6	3.4	26.0	6.3	57.7

Secondary level							
-----------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Source: CBS 2015:150

Above table, illustrations that even educated people are still following Chhaupadi practices but the percentage is low compared to uneducated people. Therefore, women’s education could play instrumental role to eradicate the discriminatory practices. A study found that 10-20 percent girls are missing their class every month in a year due to menstruation. In addition, it found that the Chhaupadi practice derives girls’ opportunity to attain school (Sandbaken, 2011). As a result, the girls’ drop- out rate increases in secondary education. “Nationally 44.2% of adolescent girls currently aged 15-19 are dropped out from school, 21.3% of the same age group has never been in school” (Misaki, 2012 : 2). That ChhaupadiPratha affects to contribute girls’ dropout from schools and negatively affects in the girls and women’s participation in education and development. Consequently, menstrual discrimination is a large barrier factor to continue their education because of lack of gender sensitive vision to create the girl-friendly environment in school and house (Jameel, 2011). The Chhaupadi Practice affects the majority of adolescent girls, as they do not attend school during their menstruation period. A report on Chhaupadi System in the far -western and Karnali states of Nepal (2013) found that there was the restriction to attend school in some district of far and mid-western regions of Nepal during their menstruation. According to that research report, 38% respondents reported that there were prohibited to touch reading materials and 32% reported that there were restricted to go school during their menstruation period (Shrestha, 2013 : 16). There is no restriction to attend school because of various awareness programs regarding ChhaupadiPratha.

On the question of do you have any restriction to go school during your menstruation period; all respondents reported that there is no any restriction for going school nowadays. However, they added that they felt uncomfortable to attend school during their menstruation period. Out of total respondents, 20% reported that they missed their class every month. From my survey, I found that 12% of girls missed their class for about 1 days, 27% girl 2 days and 61% girls 4 day in every menstruation period. On the question of why you are missing class during the menstruation period, 61% respondents answered that they missed their school due to lack of separate toilet for girls and sufficient water, 27% said due to health problems and 12% said that their school is very far from home and difficult to walk during their menstruation period (Chart 1).

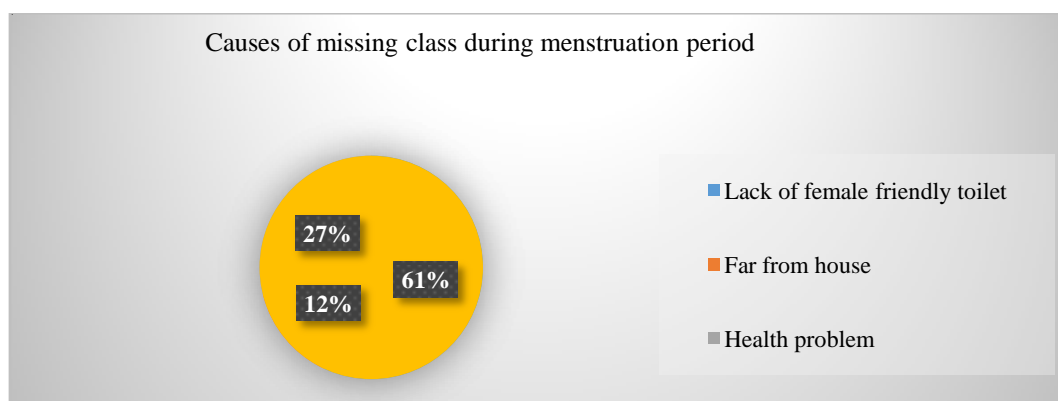


Chart 1: Causes of missing class during menstruation period

Because of absenteeism in school in every month, they have faced difficulties to cover their all courses according to their syllabus. On the question of how to cover your missed class, 59% respondents answered that they could not cover their missed topic and 41% said that they covered asking with their friends. Above analysis concludes that 80% women and girls are suffering from different health problem during their menstruation periods such as backbone pain, headache, high bleeding, dizziness and fever, pneumonia and other mental and physical problems. The most horrible issue of ChhaupadiPratha that, 36% women/girls are suffering from different kinds of long-term health problems such as white discharge, vaginal itching, uterus prolapse and pain around the uterus. They are infected because of the lack of menstruation sanitation facilities such as being prohibited to use communal water resources and the common toilet. Women have suffered from cold, fever, phenomena and respiratory problem while staying in the hut during menstruation period. Besides, I found that lactating children suffered from cold and pneumonia during their mothers’ menstruation period that affects to increase child mortality rate and found some death case while staying in menstruation hut. Twenty percent girls missed their school every month during their period because of the lack of female- friendly toilet in school, different health problem. This shows that the schools going aged adolescent girls are suffering to continue their education due to the prevalence of Chhaupadi system in those areas.

II. CONCLUSION

That calls for a prolonged multi-sectorial involvement of the government as well as national and international non-governmental organizations (which is existent even at present) in areas of education, health, women empowerment and livelihood to increase the ongoing social awareness among affected Nepali communities about the natural character of menstruating and the harmful practice of Chhaupadi. This also requires a lot of patience with the recognition that age-old practices do not die easy. Recently, there has been reduction in the discriminatory forms because of the government's efforts in the high affected area. However, it is still being practicing in the rural community of country's mid and far western part. From the survey, I found that 85% women and girls are still practicing Chhaupadi Practice in different discriminatory forms in the study area. Therefore, government's efforts are not successful in eradicating it yet. It is needed to increase government's effort by addressing direct law, the policy with sufficient program and budget as one door policy in the highly affected area specifically mid and far western region of Nepal. The tradition of *Chhaupadi* is still common among adolescent school girls in far-western Nepal, even though it imposes physical and mental hardships and challenges fundamental human rights. A brighter future for Nepali women and girls must be predicated upon the eradication of the practice of *Chhaupadi*.

REFERENCE

- [1]. Adhikari, P. et al. 2007. "Knowledge and practice regarding menstrual hygiene in rural adolescent girls of Nepal", *Kathmandu University Medical Journal (KUMJ)* 5(3): 382-386. Retrieved November 22, 2017.
- [2]. Ahmed, R. and Yemen K. 2008. "Menstrual hygiene: Breaking the silence", Water Aid Bangladesh. Retrieved October 07, 2017(<http://www.ircwash.org/sites/default/files/Ahmed-2008-Menstrual.pdf>).
- [3]. Amgain, Bimala. 2011. "Social Dimension of Chhaupadi System. A Study from Accham District, Far West Nepal", pp.1-31. Retrieved September 27, 2017
- [4]. Bhartiya, A. 2013. "Menstruation, Religion and Society". *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, pp.523-527. Retrieved on October 22, 2017 (http://www.ijssh.org/papers/296-B00016.pdf/www.socwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/fact_4-2011-menstruation.pdf 10).
- [5]. CBS. 2011. "Nepal living standards survey 2010/11". Retrieved September 30, 2017
- [6]. CBS. 2011. "Population Census of National report, Kathmandu": Central Bureau of Statistics. Retrieved October 20, 2017
- [7]. CBS. 2012. "Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2010 mid- and Far Western Regions Final Report". Retrieved November 24, 2017
- [8]. Jameel, L. 2011. "Menstruation as a barrier to education" Briefcase. Retrieved September 10, 2017 (<https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/publications/Menstruation%20as%20a%20barrier%20to%20education.pdf>).
- [9]. Joshi, Laxmi Raj. 2015. "ChhaupadiPratha: Socio-cultural Violence against Women in the Far Western Region of Nepal", pp.22-32. *Journal of Nepal Public Health Association* | Volume 6|Issue 1| No 6| Jan.-June 2015.9. Retrieved October 27, 2017
- [10]. Misaki A.U. 2012. "Creating New Social Norms for Changing the Harmful Practice for the Advancement of Adolescent Girls in Nepal". Retrieved October 10, 2017
- [11]. MOHP. 2012. "Nepal Adolescents and Youth Survey 2010/11". Population Division Ministry of Health and Population Government of Nepal Kathmandu, Nepal.
- [12]. Ozdemir, N. S. 2013. "Evaluation of Menstrual Attitude of Collegiate Athletes". *Journal of Life Science* 2013, pp. 295-300. Retrieved October 28, 2017
- [13]. Pillitteri, S.P. 2011. "School Menstrual Hygiene Management in Malawi: more than toilets", Water aid report. Retrieved October 07, 2017.
- [14]. Ranabhat et al. 2015. "Chhaupadi Culture and Reproductive Health of Women in Nepal". *Asia-Pacific Journal of Public Health* 27.7 (2016): 785-795. Retrieved October 29, 2017Rebaud, J. T. " Vol no
- [15]. Sapkota, D. at el. 2013. "Knowledge and practices regarding menstruation among school going adolescents of rural Nepal" *Journal of Kathmandu Medical College*, vol.2, pp.122-128. Retrieved November 22, 2017 (<http://www.jkmc.com.np/issue/5/122-128.pdf>).
- [16]. Shrestha, S. L. 2013. "Research on Chhaupadi System in the Far and Mid-Western Regions of Nepal". Foundation for Educational Change Maitidevi, Kathmandu.
- [17]. Tuladar, S. 2012. "Chhaupadi: A Socio-cultural Practice during Menstruation in Far Western Nepal". Retrieved September 17, 2017(<https://www.google.co.kr/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF8#q=Chhaupadi%3A+A+Sociocultural+Practice+during+Menstruation+in+Far+Western+Nepal>).
- [18]. UNFPA. 2013. "Tracking Cases of Gender-Based Violence in Nepal: Individual, institutional, legal and policy analyses". pp.1-86. Retrieved October 28, 2017

- [19]. UNICEF. 2015. "Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014". Retrieved November 22, 2017 UNICEF India. 2008. "Sharing Simple Facts: Useful Information about Menstrual Health and Hygiene". Retrieved September 27, 2017
- [20]. UNRHCO. 2011. "Chhaupadi in the Far West". Retrieved November 17, 2017 (http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Water/ContributionsStigma/others/field_bulletin_-_issue1_april_2011_-_chaupadi_in_far-west.pdf).
- [21]. Water Aid. 2009. "Is menstrual hygiene management an issue for adolescent school girls? A comparative study of four schools in different settings of Nepal", Nepal: Water aid. Retrieved September 12, 2017
- [22]. Wilson, E. and Boosey R. 2013. "A Vicious Cycle of Silence: What are the implications of the menstruation taboo for the fulfilment of women and girls' human rights and, to what extent is the menstruation taboo addressed by international human rights law and human rights bodies"? Retrieved October 03, 2017
- [23]. World Vision, International. 2014. "Investigating the Perceptions and Barriers to Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) in Zambia". Retrieved October 17, 2017

Dr. Ishwori prasad kandel. " Chhaupadipratha: Status of political and social Behaviour." IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS). vol. 24 no. 08, 2019, pp. 63-68.