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The Menstrual Impurity of Women and Girls: Chhaupadi Practice and Resistance

Anchala Chaudhary

Prithvi Narayan Campus, Tribhuvan University, Pokhara, Nepal.

Corresponding Author & Email

Anchala Chaudhary; anchalachaudhary@yahoo.com

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Abstract

The practices and beliefs attached to menstruation in different parts of world vary across time and space and have been shaped by various factors such as: gender, religion, society and culture. Although menstruation is a natural biological phenomenon, the social taboos and stigma attached with the practice isolates and detaches women and girls from doing their everyday normal activities. Nepal is a secular country but due to its traditional gender norms, values and practices, the menstruating women have been suffering from physical and psychological problems where menstruation is not simply a biological phenomenon but a socio-cultural practice. Nonetheless, customs attached with chhaupadi has been changing among young generation in new place other than home. This paper examines the way how menstruation is socially constructed despite the fact that it is biological

phenomenon. The shared norms, values and tradition associated with these practices put an individual's life at risk. The study uses both primary data as well as secondary literature review. The field work was conducted in Bajhang and Doti district of Karnali Province in the month April 2020 through an intensive case study and focus group discussion. The major finding of the research suggests that people were still practicing Chhaupadi as their customs and facing many problems in everyday life interaction. Nevertheless, the custom has been practiced in modified way among the people of new generation. The dignity of

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women attached with practice such should be defined from insider's view rather than outsider intervention in demolishing the practice.

Keywords: Chhaupadi, Chhau Goth, Menstruation, Socio-Cultural tradition

INTRODUCTION

The practices and beliefs attached to menstruation in different parts of world vary across time and space, which are shaped from various socio-cultural aspects in relations to religion, customs, tradition, caste, gender and so on. In developing countries like Asia and Africa, menstruation has been tabooed or stigmatized due to its attached norms and values of practicing it (Hennegan, et al., 2019). Though, menstruation is a natural biological process that marks beginning of womanhood but the socio-cultural norms and values associated with its practice create a gap in overall human development and also put women and girls life in risk (Amatya, et al., 2018). Especially, in Hindu communities, menstruating girls and women are considered as impure and untouchable and thus, they suffer in silence during menstruation due to many restrictions imposed on them and also menstrual hygiene practices are poor (Amatya, et al., 2018). In South Asian countries like Nepal, menstruating girls and women are forbidden to take certain foods and beverages, prohibited to enter in religious places and also restricted to do certain household chores (House et al., 2013). Especially in case of Asia and Africa, the health and sanitation of girls were very low during their menstruation and also the absentee rates are high in those days (Seymour, 2008). During menstruation, women and girls lack their fundamental human rights related with health and hygiene materials such as: sanitary pads, clean water, proper toilets and the privacy to change or dispose the pads (Sommer & Sahin, 2013).

In Nepal, the practices and taboos attached with menstruation differ across the region, community and caste (Rebaud, 2011). The women and girls are prohibited to touch some sacred things such as temple, water tap, and kitchen utensils including the male member of the families who had undergone the purification ritual like "Bratabandha" (Amatya et al., 2018). In remote areas of far-western and Karnali Province of rural Nepal, the menstruating girls and women should make a distance from both community people and their daily normal activities (Amatya et al., 2018). Religious beliefs and social hierarchies deeply shaped the Chhaupadi tradition in remote area of Nepal. The tradition forbidden women and girls from doing certain things and touching sacred things such as: temple, cowshed, cow products and so on. One can generally noticed the Chhaupadi practices in in Far West mainly in Achham, Bajura, Bajang, Doti, Baitadi, Dadheldhura, Darchula, Kanchanpur, and Kailali in and some parts of Mid-West region such as: Kalikot, Jumla, Humla, Mugu, Dailekh Jajarkot, and Surkhet Districts of Nepal (Amgain, 2011). The menstruating women and girls were treated differently than other days of life and so place in especial residence i.e. chhau goth to make other people in the house holy. During such practice, the women and girls were doesn't only placed separate place but also stopped from doing from households chores and also placed in separate place with small

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spacious room with lack of light and air pass. These women and girls were considered to be impure and thus they were strictly forbidden to touch sacred things and perform their daily activities (Mazzulo, 2011).

The word Chhaupadi is Achham's local Rawte language word. Chhau is menstruation and Padi means woman (Mazzulo, 2011). The practice has been exists in the villages of Achham, Bajura, Doti and Bajhang. These girls and women have to stay outside the house i.e. in chhau goth a especial place built for practicing Chhaupadi. As these girls and women are contaminated, so restricts to touch the male members of the family and some sacred things. During the first time of their menstruation, the girls were sent for 14 days in chhau goth and refrain from participating in daily activities. These girls were served by low calories foods in separate utensils keeping a distance from the girls.

The myth behind practicing of this tradition can be traced back to Hindu religious holy book, that assumes the menstruating girls and women staying with family makes God unhappy. The God of heaven "Indra" suspect of killing a Brahmin and because of the illicit acts with women that Indra committed during his quest to redeem his sin, for these acts all women and girls were said to be punished through menstruation cycle (Hussain, 2011). If the women and girls stay at home during menstruation, that will infuriate the Gods and consequently that wrath will adversely affects their entire family. The report published by UNHCR (2011) also stated that, the religious belief attached with menstruating girls and women were restricted to touch the cattle, fruit bearing plants, crops and even the male member of the family otherwise it will die. Thus these women and girls were separated from their everyday lifestyles and urged to live in chhau goth and not permitted to take dietary foods such as animals products like milk, meat, ghee and so on as well as fruits, and green vegetables aren't given so, these women have to survive only on rice, salt, and some cereals/dry foods (UNHCR, 2011). Additionally, the women and girls are stopped from participating in various religious activities whereas at the same time, they were expected to participate in hard labour, carrying out the daily chores that they would normally do, such as working in the fields, fetching firewood, washing clothes, and so on (Sharma, 2010). It was believed that, the holy and sacred things will become contaminated during menstruation and the chances of God to become angry will increase if someone breaks the rules (Bennett, 1983). During this time women and girls should be morally and socially assists from family and societal level to preserve their basic human rights as these girls are denied to eat ghee, milk, curd, and etcetera, and are forbidden to touch public tap, temple, home, and food (Amgain, 2011). Both government and community should pay special attention about the Chhaupadi tradition that put girls and women life at risks and should formulate law against traditional practices. Because, the long term effects of such process can be seen in their insecurity and embarrassment for being impure or untouchable during their period including the loss of participation in their normal activities (UN, 2011). These girls and women have lost their life while practicing chhau due to poisonous snake and scorpion bites as well as animal attacks in goth (UN, 2011). The three case of death in the period of ten months urged the Nepal Government to enact law about Chhaupadi practice in Far western and Karnali

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Province and the Nepali Parliament enacted law about the prohibition of such practice by stating Chhaupadi as criminalizing act and impose a fine and a three month jail sentence for the person forcing a women to follow the custom (Preiss, 2017; Pokharel, 2017). However, in real scenario one find different practice and it was concluded that though, the Government declared village or community as Chhaupadi free zone however the reality is different as the women and girls are still suffering from psycho-social and health related problems (BBC, 2017). This all suggests more than the government act; incredible step should enacted order to minimize the impacts of chhau. In one report from United Nation's field bulletin, estimated that in the Achham district of Far-western Nepal, over 95% of women and girls practice Chhaupadi tradition (UN, 2011). Resistance mechanism with appropriate techniques which ensures the dignity of women and girls should be enacted from both government and community level. Therefore, the overarching objective of this study is to assess the existing practice of Chhaupadi and different resistance mechanism adopted by both community and government body to persist and prohibit the Chhaupadi tradition respectively.

Analytical Framework

In this section, I discuss how Chhaupadi practices limits women's participation from public sphere of life and how their basic human rights such as: proper food, health, education and shelters were compromised due to superstitious belief attached with customs they followed. When natural biological phenomenon is wrapped with socio-cultural values practices, it puts human life at risks and danger. In the present study, I use the term, "suffering", as a tool for analysing how women and girls passes through pain and anxiety during their stay in chhau goth in the name of preserving the culture. For the cultural integration, generally people accept such type rules and regulation that put their life at risk. However, before expanding on analytical framework, I briefly reflect on myth behind the practice of Chhaupadi in Nepal.

The Veil of Myth behind Chhaupadi Practice in Nepal

Nepal as federal democratic republic is a geographically small, yet culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse south Asian country situated between the People's Republic of China and India. Though, the country is constitutionally secular but majority almost eighty per cent of its people follows Hinduism as main religion and thus, their lifestyle are guided by Hindu philosophy. The Constitution of Nepal, adopted in 2015, affirms Nepal as secular federal parliamentary republic divided into seven provinces. Out of seven provinces, the Far western and Karnali province lag behind the rest of the country in terms of overall development and gender equality. The socio-cultural composition of this region is totally based on patriarchal, where different types of caste, ethnicity, and religion related issues are common due to lack of education and awareness. This all means, they are far behind of legal and customary rights and also are trap in social rituals, norm and tradition that push their normal life in harsh. Though, there are many traditions prevalent in Far-western and Karnali province, Chhaupadi is one of life threatening practice in this region. According

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to Deslierres (2013), Chhaupadi is derived from Hindu tradition that relates to secretions associated with menstruation and childbirth. Menstruation is a natural biological phenomenon the social taboos and stigma attached with this practice isolates women and girls from their everyday life style. It is estimated that, every girls and women have to pass 3,000 days through this process in their reproductive age and quarter of them menstruate every month, starting between at the ages of 11 to 16 and ending at 45 to 50 years (PSI/Nepal, et al., 2017). This meant being a woman one has to suffer a lot during menstruation or chhau.

The word Chhaupadi is derived from a local word used in the Raut dialect of Achham district in the far west where Chhau means menstruation and padi means a woman (Nilima & Tandon, 2011). Under this practice, women are considered impure during their periods and are therefore required to refrain from participating in normal daily activities. Nevertheless, the practice of chhau is not limited to menstruation process but also during delivery time and thus child birth take place in the unhealthy place. Thus, the life of two i.e. both mother and the baby are compelled to stay for 10 to 14 days after birth (Lama & Kamaraj, 2015). These girls and women are sent to a Chhaupadi shed or huts made of a simple stone, mud grass, and stick and usually unventilated.

Chhaupadi has several health impacts associated with it. Most of the girls and women die from suffocation, especially during the winter when they light a fire inside to keep themselves warm, whereas sweltering temperature are common in summer. Girls and women are also dying from diarrhea, pneumonia and hypothermia. Other causes of deaths include snake bites and wild animal attacks. Additionally, Chhaupadi also leads to genital infections from a lack of menstrual hygiene, under nutrition due to food barriers such as dairy products, and uterus and cervical problems due to heavy works that are assigned to menstruating women and girls though, they are not allowed to enter in house (PHASE, 2013). The practice of Chhaupadi has also effect on women psychology as they are left to feel abandoned and insecure in an isolated hut resulting in depression, low self-esteem and disempowerment. In addition, there is also constant dread of sexual abuses and attack at night due to dark at shed and lack of door lock (Amgain, 2011). A 2011 UN report suggested that cases of physical abuse and rape, especially in chhau shed are underreported due to stigma.

Thus, the social practice of chhau limits women's capability to live a safe, healthy and educated life and forbids women from anything to touch during their menstruation (Amgain, 2011). In other words, the basic domain of human development indicators such as: food, health, education and shelter are violated in the name of superstitious belief. In the name of tradition, the practice of Chhaupadi has been passed from generation to generation as well as from village to city as the new form of chhau practice has adopted by so called civilized people in modern Nepal.

Suffering and Chhaupadi: A matter of psycho-social problem

The term “suffering” has been discussed in relations to various states of sensations such as discomfort, strain, concern, sorrow, diffidence and sadness. These emotions may be due to external environment or mental stress due to

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detachment from some close one. Suffering is defined as a condition of thrilling pain linked to occurrences that danger the intactness of the person (Oreopoulos, 2005). Regarding the view about suffering Dahal (2010) stated that, pain and discomfort remain for short period of time whereas suffering experiences for long time that causes continuous pain and stress. It is all about the distress of persons physical, psychological, emotional, sociological and spiritual sides (Dahal, 2010). Nevertheless, suffering can be explained in association people's customs, rules, regulations and practices adopt for their life time (Dahal, 2010). It shouldn't be explained only in terms of physical condition but also psycho-social problem which varies across time and space and also individual to individual.

The same idea of suffering is discussed here as the girls and women distressed by the socio-cultural practices prevalent in their community. Chhaupadi are considered as natural biological condition but the belief attached with it in Far-western and Karnali Province has threatened the intactness of the person. The girls and women have barrier to enter into their own kitchen, own bedroom, restriction on certain foods, entry into temples and even in schools. These daily pursuits of life are affected by societal norms and values and thus, these girls and women become a means for practicing the community superstitious beliefs (Kadariya and Aro, 2015). This means suffering affects the whole being i.e. physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social aspects. Though, menstruation is biological process but women have to suffer beyond their expectation without any refusal against the tradition. It is only those women and girls experienced the level of suffering who underwent the realm of Chhaupadi. Nevertheless, the experiences of women during childbirth have different meaning of suffering. On one side, due to birth of baby the mother find herself in complete state of being womanhood by overlook the tradition Chhaupadi. But due to tradition, the mothers has given poor nutritious food and forced to live vulnerable condition along with full of emotional and psycho-social distress. Thus, Chhaupadi has also affected cognition of women and girls as they were detached from their everyday normal interaction process and also separated from near and dear one during menstruation which ultimately results in loss of their dignity (Amgain, 2011). The beliefs associates with Chhaupadi that, if the menstruating girls and women touch cattle, they will die; if they cross a water source, it will dry up; if they touch a plant, it will shrink and not to touch any male members of the family as well as idols of deities and temple pushed them to threat about one's self and identity. Thus, suffering as a process occurs in relation to detachment from everyday life activities due to attached stigma associated with traditions. Suffering as a sensation is all about the on-going mental process take place due to the perceptions and values attached with traditional norms and values practice by community people (Kadariya and Aro, 2015).

Chhaupadi as an outcome of social capital rather than biological process

Generally, social capital is defined as norms and values attached with social relationships that stimulates collective action for mutual benefit in a social affiliation. Normally, this social capital has control through human collective actions at individual and community level. Social capital is an individual

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belongingness that is gained from one's social status and position which enables a person to exercise power on the group or individual who mobilizes the resources (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital is therefore closely related to the individual's capacity to access resources in the society through social relationships. Similarly, Putnam has defined social capital as the characteristics of individual and community in which they belongs (Putnam, 1995). Nevertheless, in context of Nepalese society we found social capital becomes a neck bell ring that put an individual life at risk due to traditional culture and beliefs attached with Chhau practice.

Though, Nepal is a secular country, as declared by the Constitution of Nepal 2012, but majority of people follow Hinduism as its religion and thus, based on Hindu philosophy, both family and community imposes certain restriction against women when they are having their periods. Menstruation is a natural biological process but in few parts of Nepal, the practice is more than it. The series of rules and regulation associated with Menstruation in Far-western region of Nepal are distinguished by "Chhaupadi": a cultural preservation. Chhaupadi is manifestation of superstitious belief among people that if women stay at home during their periods, it will infuriate the Gods and consequently that wrath will negatively affect the entire family (Kadarira and Aro, 2013). Nevertheless, the prevalent of chhau exile women and girls from their families and forbid them to perform normal daily activities. Menstruating girls and women are restricted from touching men, children, cattle, living plants, public taps, and fruit-bearing trees, and to enter temples and their houses (Kunwar, 2016). They are also not given dairy products, such as butter, milk especially cow milk, and yogurt, (Amagain, 2011). These women and girls has forcefully spent their life in small hut called chhau goth. Yet, they carry their heavy loaded works outside the house such as such as digging, collecting firewood and grasses, and farming (Amatya, et al., 2018). In relation to Chhaupadi, all the communal norms and values attached with tradition established a strong bond of relationship between its members and helps in prevention of side effects of deep rooted tradition.

METHODOLOGY AND STUDY SITE

Qualitative methods design was used for the data collection. In-depth interview followed by case study and focus group discussion (FGD) were used as data collection tools. I had purposively selects 45 respondents; 20 women and girls were selected from Chhainpur Bazar and 25 girls from the Doti campus who were studying in B.A program. These girls, who came from different parts of Doti district, lived in rent room for the study purposes. Five case study were taken based on two different criteria: one group of women were selected above the age group of 40 who had never seen the door of school and perceived Chhaupadi as their soul of society; whereas other group of girls were students from of school and campus who explicitly mentioned that Chhaupadi should practice in modified form to keep their custom alive. Three focus group discussion were taken; one at Chhainpur bazaar among the old aged women whereas two were conducted at Doti campus; one among boys students and

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other among girls students of B.A. program at campus periphery. All of the qualitative information was analysed using manual thematic method, where the responses were transcribed with some catchy phrases retained in their original versions and contexts in the form of extracts or excerpts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

In this section, I will discuss the demographic characteristics of women such as: age, education, religion, caste, and marital status. Most of the respondents belonged to the age groups of 20 to 30 years whereas other belong above 45 years old. In terms of educational qualification most of the respondents were students studying in bachelor level whereas five of them were studying in grade eight. Only few i.e. 8/9 of the respondents had never been to school. In addition to this, about 25 of the respondents belong to Brahmin, Chhetri and Thakuri whereas others belong from Dalit community. Mainly Hinduism was followed by all of the respondents. Most of the respondents i.e. about 25 were unmarried, and only ten of them were married. The logic behind choosing this type of respondents is to meet the overall objective of the study that requires the types of resistance practices about "Chhaupadi" to maintain their dignity life according to their age, educational qualification and marital status.

Changing Chhaupadi Practices

In a remote village of Doti district named Ranagaun, where I was born and grown up with my family who has full respect towards their tradition and customs. For the first time, when I had menstruation my father asked my mother to take me in chhau goth where I always see her to stay. I was reading class 6 and had missed class almost for seven days and then it becomes routine for me to stay in goth every four days in a month. So, I am always away from household affairs during those days and prohibited to eat some dairy products. But when I came here in Doti for studying in eleven class I found myself very secure as I do not have to stay in chhau goth and also do not have restriction like in home. Because, me and my friend Sonu living in a room where we do not have other space for practicing the tradition in a rigid manner like in village but we both do not enter in temple, do not eat some dairy products as our mother taught in village and if possible one of us do not cook during our period time. We follow our tradition of Chhaupadi but in our own way as we came to know menstruation as natural phenomenon and every girl has to face in her life. Nevertheless, the degree and way of practicing depends on the type of society a person live. Previously, I was living in remote village where everyone has to stay in chhau goth and so, I do. But now in city we practice our tradition in customized way. As we do not have extra space for living during menstruation, so stay in same room but after four days we wash all our things by throwing gold water as our mother taught us to do so. (Rabina Thakuri, 21 years)

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The above statement has been open a succession of discussion about the changing trend of Chhaupadi practice among the young girls. Chhaupadi has been one of the major customs influenced by Hindu religious doctrine in this community. Family is the first school where a girls learned about Chhaupadi and its mother responsibilities who trained her daughter to stay in chhau goth a risky place. The mother and no other family members ever asks their girls to abandon the practice and though she share experiences of her own discomfort, pain or anxiety that she herself experience at chhau goth. But mother never asks her daughter to give up the tradition. The belief and perception about Chhaupadi has been passed from one generation to other to keep their socio-cultural value alive. The report published by Nepal Fertility Care (2015) showed, 77% of the participants has been restricted by their own family members in doing the daily activities during menstruation. Similarly, Sandbakken (2011) states that the traditional patriarchal of society is the determinant of the continuation of Chhaupadi system. Thus, Chhaupadi as traditional customs practice by people of the community for the sake of their culture alive. After asking the reasons behind practicing Chhaupadi in their community, a 48 years old woman in Chainpur bazaar deciphers that:

I am a 48 now and I had never gone to the school. I do not have knowledge about outside world. Chhau goth is our tradition and a women has to stay away from the residential house during chhau. This is very crucial because we were impure during chhau and if we stay inside the house, the souls of our forefathers get angry. If we stay inside house, our happiness will be ended resulting in the destruction of cattle death or other family members get ill. Nevertheless, some women have died in goth, this is all due to their fate or sin of past life. So, we should respect our culture, values and customs that we learned from our parents.

Though, menstruation as a natural biological phenomenon it is considered as dirty, impure, a sin and cause for social destruction if a people doesn't follow it honestly. Girls and women were forbidden to enter in house, temple, having nutritious food and touch male members of the family. The family along with neighbouring people is responsible for this practice. The above presented case also shows how both society and the family are responsible for too keep Chhaupadi alive. During Focus Group Discussion, the participants state that; it's all their social norms and values to which they should respect and obey and so, Chhaupadi should be practiced as their ancestors did. But the now so many young girls and women are not following this tradition and they will be badly bless. Nevertheless, the young girls have different view about Chhaupadi:

Chhaupadi is essential social practices but few forcefully imposed activities is not good for well-being. Now, it's time to change our perceptions and we should self-assess our level of knowledge regarding understanding of Menstruation in society. We should follow our culture and tradition but we shouldn't adopt it to give up our life as heard in daily newspaper that girls were died in chhau goth. We know our ancestors have followed and respected our traditions but we wants in different way. We do not want to exclude from our routinized life style and restricted on

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doing certain things. We need to move side by side as our brother did in home and enjoy all the day during chhau without having any anxiety and pressure.

Chhaupadi as a Hindu tradition practiced from long time in the community people life as they think menstruation as a curse to women by god Indra. In the Elementary forms of religious life, Durkehim has stated that, “the religion is the set of ideas and practices by which people sacrilege the social structure and the bonds of the community. In this way, religion functions to ensure the unconscious priority of communal identification” (Durkheim, 1912). According to Durkheim, religion plays a vital role in maintenance of social structure and social agency. Rituals as important part of religions bind people with each other through their feeling emotions and, expression during interactions. Indeed, the practice like the Chhaupadi tradition has been inherited from generation to generation as a part of the rituals. In Hindu religion is therefore deep-rooted in Nepali society, being inherited from generation to generation. Women in primary agent for influencing Chhaupadi practice among the other female. During interview, almost all of the respondents said that it was their mother who taught about Chhaupadi for the first time. The theory propounded by Moi (2010) stated that, "when women consent to their own oppression and help to oppress other women, they are to be blamed". The women become subject of "other" in themselves when become agents for explaining Chhau as a curse given by god and thus they are impure as other women. Nevertheless, men proof to be absolute and pure agent as the carrier of the tradition is women themselves. Still, the women and girls accept themselves as “other”, or a “second person”, the struggle and conflict always seen in proving their existence as human being in front of others (Moi 2010).

The experienced shared by government employee in Satyabadi School at Chainpur, both being a teacher and sufferer of Chhaupadi is very prominent to dig the hidden reasons for less girls students in harvesting seasons of Yarsagumba:

I was born and raised in village. I was sent to the Chhau-hut during my adolescent age by mother and I should strictly followed mothers advice otherwise I was cursed by god. At that time I do not have any idea about the tradition and so follow all the rules made by mother for me. was never given milk and milk products because if I had drink milk the cow in the house was died that's why I stopped taking milk even, nutritious food during my period. But as I grown up and came here in bazaar, I realized that menstruation as natural phenomenon one shouldn't overlook their health and should be pay more attention during menstruation. Nowadays, in school girls were seen more aware about their tradition and they do not have special chhau goth like that in village. Nevertheless, the girls themselves become aware and conscious while doing any activities. For instance: in school these girls seems very shy and themselves create a distance from boys colleagues during menstruation. We still do not visit in temple and attempt any religious ceremonies.

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Similarly, another women aged about 56/57 have shared very interesting stories about her own menstruation. She has three different types of live experiences that faced throughout her lifetime. She went with her husband in India for working, where they lived in a single room with only small free space for cooking. In village Mankumari had live in chhau goth during menstruation as like other women in village and had restricted to certain works. Nevertheless, when she was in India due to lack of space, she doesn't had to follow the tradition, she herself make food and do all households chores. Her husband doesn't interfere in doing her works but when they back to village, her husband himself asked her to go chhau goth during menstruation. She had bitter experiences, the same person playing different role in different space. During FGD, women argued that, the male members of house were also very strict about Chhaupadi practice. These men insist them not to contaminate house by living in the residential house and the women just nodded her head in his support. The in-depth interview indicates that women have become mental, physical and social sufferer from any angle at the time of menstruation.

A case teacher teaching at Doti campus clearly illustrates how she finds herself in different world while visiting her husband house in vacation. During the festive season when it was time to visit her in-laws, she always take menstruation control medicine as she remembered her first experience of Chhau in husband house:

You know, I was married after completing master degree from Tribhuvan University Kathmandu. My husband was Assistant lecturer in Doti and so, I had to move with him after marriage where I also started teaching. In Kathmandu, I didn't practice chhaupadi as like in my home town and I found myself free and happy with the living there. But after marriage I had to restart the tradition practice. Still I remembered the day when I had my period in in-laws house. My mother-in-law also wants me to stay in the chhau goth during menstruation and I can't deny her and stay in goth without light 15 minutes distance from house. I do not have mobile phone to pass the time. At that time, my husband also do not speaks in front of his parent to not send me in chhau goth. Here in Silgadhi, I do not have to visit any chhau goth but still my husband restricted me to enter in kitchen and going to temple.

From the childhood, people living here were taught about Chhaupadi tradition by proverb that: if they hadn't followed then god will be angry and bad luck comes to village. It is very hard for the young girls to break the tradition established from long decades. All the tradition were routinized, normalized, accepted and passes from one generation to other and this is one essential reason the community people doesn't want to abandon their tradition but can modified as their needs. As most of the respondents are educated and have adequate knowledge about Chhaupadi but still they practice. During an in-depth interview, these educated respondents argued that their soul doesn't allow them to enter inside the sacred places and even in kitchen though they are far from their village for the study purposes. The people already knew about the lawful action passed by the Government of Nepal claiming it as social crime and evil tradition.

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Though the state has passed law about discrimination against gender based violence, violation of reproductive health as well as physical, mental or any other forms of abuse faced by women in their way of life but reality was different. In the name of making tradition alive, people were still engaged in ongoing process of practicing the tradition.

Resistance mechanism adopted both by individual and state

I am pleased to say you that, girls like me who is educated and young had try to abolish their ancestor's tradition, especially Chhaupadi. Last year there was a campaign at school against the Chhaupadi and I actively participated in the program and became a part of knowledge dissemination about menstruation and its impacts on body. Nevertheless, I myself never changed my inner intuition on Chhaupadi. Still, I am practicing myself thinking that God will be angry with me if I don't follow it (Gita Thakuri, 13 years).

We feel lucky ourselves that we all are breaking the Chhaupadi tradition we had practice in village. Here we are living in rented room and do not have extra space for practicing chhau, we came to know God didn't have angry with us, and now we all colleagues have common understanding we should engage in the campaigns against Chhaupadi in our village after completing college. Now we all have able understand and convince against the Chhaupadi tradition due to higher education that we achieved here in campus. Some of the villages here in district are already declared as Chhaupadi-free villages and this is also positive aspiration for us knowledge dissemination in our community (FGD, Doti Campus).

The above two different interviews taken at Chhainpur bazaar and in Doti Campus open a succession of discussion about the resistance mechanism adopted by local people about their ancestors practices. The young generation who have knowledge about the causes and consequences of menstruation want to control the undemanding rules for the sake of God and to preserve their tradition. These mass of people do not only challenge their existing tradition but also proof that no unseen God gets angry and punishes them for not following the custom. This is very essential and sustainable approach for the abolition of traditional customs from the members of community themselves. Nevertheless, many NGOs, INGOs, Government of Nepal and many local organizations have been working to diminish Chhaupadi but the outsider's invasion in the deeply rooted culture doesn't have positive implication. The government of Nepal has passed the law to break Chhaupadi tradition and if anyone forces to practice the ritual will sent to custody up to three months and pay fine 3000 rupees. But the question is about the effectiveness of program formulated from outsider's community without knowing the intensity of the cultural practices and what is the dignity for the local people. So, the resistance mechanism adopted by the community people and mechanism adopted by others to diminish the tradition has been re-assessed. Dignity should be either well defined from the outsider or it should be defined from the insider view because the local people are always in search of

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preservation of their tradition which is their way of defining the dignity. Whereas on other hand, the outsider knowledge to diminish local customs in providing quality of life for the humanitarian dignity should be moulded with insider's perspective. This is all due to community people adopt another mechanism to continuity of their tradition.

The news published in national level newspaper "The Himalayan Times" on June 13, 2018; opened a series of questions regarding the resistance mechanism adopted by the government to diminish the tradition in Bajura district. The news focused on how rural women in far western Nepal is staying in den like structures in the forest or in a plastic tent after the demolish of her chhau goth from the state while declaring the village as Chhaupadi-free village. These women have no choice for other place to stay during chhau and they should follow their tradition that is even harder than before. Resistance mechanism in association with local community and full involvement of both men and women with a proper dissemination of knowledge about menstruation should be well considered for marinating the dignity of local people. Social contribution of an individual for the preservation of social values and customs is a long term process which is manifested through an individual devotion to practice it (Keyes, 1998). Furthermore, a healthy individual with awareness about happening around them lives more meaningful life than others. Thus, the resistance mechanism adopted both by community people and the government should be reassessed with positive aspiration about the impacts of practicing the tradition on people's health without hindering local knowledge and practices. Socially healthy contribution either from insiders or outsiders will be more fruitful for the overall development of society. Nevertheless, the social exclusion and isolation of women from their everyday life style doesn't lead to women to feel loss of their dignity but the women also faces psycho-social problems in extreme cases. Additionally, the women and girls practicing Chhaupadi never live a healthy and happy life due to certain customs attached with the tradition which isolates them from near and dear one (Amagain, 2012).

Though, menstruation is natural and physiological phenomenon but the socio-cultural tradition attached with it practice makes it as a life threatening diseases in Karnali and Far-western province. The perception attached with tradition does not only limit the girls and women overall development in sectors like education, health, social accessibility but also deteriorate their mental health. The perception and belief about the chhaupadi has been divided into two lines. One group of people is those who want to continue the tradition that has been in practice from long time by their fore fathers. These people thoughts it's their dignity and right to continue the customs where outsider interventions aren't appropriate to demolish the tradition. These people believes that letting a menstruating women to engaged in everyday life interaction activities and allowing them in sacred places will infuriate the God and that wrath can inflict serious impacts on the entire family members as well as on community.

Similarly, the new generation girls and women who have been encounter with outside space have different perception and belief towards the practice. Nevertheless, they have been insisted by their parents and senior to follow and

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respects the customs otherwise the misfortune and unbelievable events will occur in their life as well as the families will be shaking, trembling and shouting due to broken rules. So, these girls want to protest against this in silent form when they are far away from home. The silence protests are seen in the form of reformation of practice that, these girls are comfortably doing the household activities and participating in public space activities in new place where they are inculcated with adequate knowledge and awareness about the impacts of chhaupadi practice. Though, these girls want to preserve their tradition and customs but they didn't want to sacrifice their life. On contrary, modification in tradition needs to be considered to sustain the custom and religious values and for which multi-sectorial involvement of state and community level initiation should be necessary.

CONCLUSION

Chhaupadi as a custom practiced in Karnali Province of Nepal is unsafe tradition for both women and girls as it impacts on their social, psychological and physical well-being of health. As women and girls are at the centre target by the male dominated society, the customs always symbolized as the impurity and sin of previous life. Though, men and women are equal for grasp the opportunities but Chhaupadi as tradition withdrawal women full participation in the routinized life. In other way, women are discriminated based on their gender role assigned by society due to natural phenomenon. Moi (2010) adhere that, the degree of freedom is crucial factors for minimizing the gender based discrimination among men and women and it's all about women accessibility over all is about their degree of freedom and not happiness, which must be used as the measuring stick to assess the situation of women. During focus group discussion with old women, they express they were happy to follow their tradition because their ancestors had practice them and it is part of their culture. The traditional norms and values attached with culture have been influenced and convinced women to intake Chhaupadi as their dignity instead of burden. Based on Moi (2010) argument, the choice of women is not about the happiness but their freedom of participating in everyday activities, freedom to have healthy foods, freedom to go school, freedom to participate with all other members in society and so on. Nevertheless, the women are always excluded from basic human rights due to existing socio-cultural traditions like Chhaupadi.

The perception and belief about Chhaupadi has similar explanation and experiences among the community people but with the passage of time, Chhaupadi has been viewed differently among different age group, educated and uneducated groups, male and female groups, rural and city area as well as basic knowledge about menstruation as biological phenomenon rather than socio-cultural practices. For instance, the older generation is highly strict about their customs due to their faith in god, the idea of purity and sin and practice of isolation during menstruation. Whereas on other side, the younger generations living in city area having good education seem to be in the mood of transition to their tradition that hamper their quality of life. For these group of people, the rules and regulation attached with Chhaupadi has become burden of their life

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style and feel uncomfortable in following the tradition as they such tradition will deteriorate their physical, psychological and social well-being. During in-depth interview with 23 years student in Doti Campus, evidently affirmed that, Chhaupadi can't be diminish from those Nepalese family who had practicing from long time. In supplement to her argument, she give a example that though her Uncle and Aunt are living in America but her Aunt has to live in separate room during her periods and forbidden to enter in kitchen. This statement doesn't only elucidates the intensity of articulating dignity of practicing the tradition but also shows how a new form of chhau goth is created in modern life style. During focus group discussion, the male students at Doti campus fascinatingly illustrated though they didn't like Chhaupadi tradition but also they can't go against their tradition due to spiritual values attached with it from long duration of time. Multidimensional approach such as education, awareness raising program especially to women in rural area, knowledge dissemination about the faith of tradition and so many other activities should be initiated both from community and state level at same time to overcome the harmful effects of Chhaupadi. Thus, both structure and agency shaping practices should be assembled to protect the lives and dignity of girls and women.

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