

## Menstrual hygiene practices among adolescent girls of Koli Mahadev tribe with reference to Aambegaon taluka, Pune district

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### Abstract:

Health is an important part of one's overall development. Healthy status consists not only physical and mental but also consists of all other dimensions including spiritual, socio-cultural, economic, political. As per 2011 census the tribal population groups form 8.87 percent of the total population of India. The health of tribal people is the conception in their own cultural system with low education and less awareness of the modern health care and health sources. According to Sharma (2004: 72) beliefs, customs and practices determine the health seeking behavior of tribals and 'health status are indicated by social and economic conditions, nutrition and living conditions, dietary habits, housing, education, child rearing practices, socio-religious beliefs, taboos and superstitions, etc.'

The present research article will try to study the prevailing health practices among tribal adolescent girls and the attitude of tribal adolescent girls towards menarche.

### Introduction:

According to World Health Organization (WHO), "health is a state of complete physical, mental & social well-being and not merely the absence of diseases or infirmity." If we look at the definition it talks about the health in a holistic manner and covering the major areas i.e., physical which deals with the physical fitness of a person, mental health talks about the mental soundness and social health is about the social condition or surrounding and adjusting with it. It also focuses on the social relationship of an individual with their surroundings. Therefore, we call a person healthy at the time when he/she has good physical health, sound mind and good social relations.

The inclusion of SRHR in the SDGs and its inclusion in international policy instruments obligates governments to ensure its implementation and mandates the acknowledgment of sexual and reproductive health within the context of human rights. India, as a signatory to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and home to one-sixth of humanity, is committed to ensure the implementation of policies and legislation protecting sexual and reproductive health rights. The national laws and regulations governing SRHR in India allow much room

for change in this area and have significant gaps. India has several reproductive health issues that must be addressed in order to enhance people's reproductive health. "78% of the 15 million abortions in India take place outside medical facilities". According to data, almost 30 million married women in their reproductive years are unable to use contraception. <sup>1</sup>

### **Tribal Health:**

As per the report published in 2013 by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India collaboratively assessed the health status of tribal people in India. The major findings of the report were as below.

- a. The tribal population of the country is 8.6% of the total population.
- b. Almost 40.6% population is leaves under the below poverty line.
- c. Anemia between the age group of 15 to 49 years is 65%.
- d. Almost 40.6% of the tribal population lives below the poverty line.
- e. Open defecate rate is 74.4% in tribal areas.

If we look towards the above data, it clearly shows that compared to non-tribal population the tribal people are lagging in the overall development.

As per the report on the expert committee on tribal health that the resemblance between the various tribal groups though it is a progressive state or a non-progressive state in India; that all having poor health conditions and having limited access to the healthcare services. The health status of tribal people is deeply associated with their culture, traditions, and the environment. Therefore, when we want to understand or study the health status of the tribal communities, we need not understand it as a single phenomenon but need to study in relation with the socio-economical context.<sup>2</sup>

As per the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) <sup>3</sup> compared to other social groups among tribals 21.1% teenage girls had commenced childbearing. Along with this the rate of institutional deliveries is lowest among tribal communities as they are not always accessible to the people. This resulted and estimated by the Rapid Survey of the Children (2013-14) that the tribal communities are on highest no in the children with low birth rate. Due to the geographical location and the cultural background, there is a huge gap between the health infrastructure, the resources, and shortfalls in the medical and para medical staff according to the Rural Health Statistics (RHS).

Many tribal people are forest dwellers and merely associated with the forest. Along with the NTFPs they are also aware of the medicinal plants. Tribal people rely on the medicinal plants and nature or the supernatural entity at the time of healing for illness. For the healing they mostly call the people from their own communities and the people in which they have faith. The reason behind this is the healers are part of their own community and culture and another important reason is the public health institutions are far from their reach as well as lacking in emotional content and spiritual security.

### **Review of literature:**

Dingra Rajni et. al. (2022) authored an article entitled “Knowledge & Practices Related to Menstruation among Tribal (Gujjar) Adolescent Girls.” It focuses the tribal adolescent girls between 13 to 15 years of Jammu district. The study's main objectives were to know the prior information level of adolescent girls about menstruation and to understand the practices followed by them. The major findings were found in the research below.

1. Many of the respondents have a menstruation cycle between 30 to 45 days (about 1 and a half months).
  2. no respondent found aware about the process of menstruation before they started menstruating.
  3. The strong religious and cultural domination was found, and most girls were restricted from visiting religious places or forced to do fasts in those days. Also, the girls were not allowed to see in the mirror in those days.
  4. all the respondents shared that they do not take bath or even brush during the menstruation.
- The paper concluded with the outcome that the girls have exceptionally low level of awareness, knowledge and clarity about menstruation and many generations are following the traditional religious practices without questioning.

Kumari Shantana et. al. (2021) focused on the Munda adolescent girls about the knowledge and practices related to menstruation. The study was conducted for girls aged 13 to 18 years. The study showed that most respondents were unaware about the menstruation before they started it. The study shows that most respondents lived in unhygienic conditions in those days.

Michael Judy et. al. (2020) authored an article on Knowledge and Practice of Adolescent Females about Menstruation & Menstruation Hygiene visiting a Public Healthcare Institute of Quetta, Pakistan. The data has been collected through girls aged between 10 and 19 years. The results show that,

1. Most of the respondents do not attend school during menarche.
2. Majority of the respondents did not take bath during menarche.
3. Majority of the respondents reported that they did not attend any session related to menstruation hygiene in the school and the mother is the only source of information.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

1. To find out the prevailing practices of menstrual hygiene among adolescent tribal girls.
2. To know the impact of social stigma about menstruation on perception of tribal adolescent girls.

### **Research Design:**

The said research is of descriptive research design. Here the researcher has described the menstrual practices followed by adolescent girls and described that. Also, health issues occurred among adolescent girls described in the said research. Along with this some of the statements and the perception of respondents towards it have been described.

### **Sampling method:**

The data has been collected from Pune district. From Ambegaon taluka the respondents have been selected through probability sampling with simple random sampling method.

### **Data analysis and Discussion:**

The data has been collected from 180 respondents of Ambegaon taluka. The data has been collected under the following heads.

- a. Health practices during menstruation
- b. Health issues during menarche
- c. Social obligation during menarche

**a. Health practices during menstruation**

## Use of sanitary napkin

use of sanitary napkin	Frequency	Percent
always	69	38.3
sometime	96	53.3
rarely	12	6.7
never	3	1.7
Total	180	100.0

The above table shows the use of sanitary napkins by the respondents. It depicts that 38.3% respondents always used sanitary napkin, 53.3% respondents sometimes used sanitary napkin, 6.7% respondents rarely used sanitary napkin and only 1.7% respondents do not use sanitary napkin. Therefore, it is concluded that maximum respondents sometime used sanitary napkins as an absorbent material.

## Dry washed cloth (absorbent material) in sunlight

dry washedcloth in sunlight	Frequency	Percent
always	48	26.7
sometime	9	5.0
rarely	9	5.0
never	99	55.0
NA	15	8.3
Total	180	100.0

The above table discuss about the drying of cloths in the sunlight. It describes that 26.7% respondent always dry washed cloth in the sunlight, 5% respondent sometimes dry washed cloth in sunlight, 5% respondent rarely dry washed cloth in sunlight, 55% respondents never dry washed cloth in sunlight., 8.3% respondents are not using cotton cloth that is why they are not applicable for this. After using cotton cloth, it is particularly important to wash it clean and

dry it into the sunlight, but this study shows that maximum number of girls are not dry washed cloth into the sunlight they are dry it into the dark room.

#### Availability of toilet facility

Toilet facility at home	Frequency	Percent
Yes	87	48.3
No	93	51.7
Total	180	100.0

This table shows the availability of the toilet facility in the house. 48.3% of respondents have toilet in the house and 51.7% use open toilet means they are going to open place for the toilet. Therefore, it is concluded that most of the respondents are going to open places.

#### b. Health issues during menarche

##### Nature of physical problem

Nature of physical problems	Frequency	Percent
abdominal pain	90	50.0
leg & back pain	60	33.3
migraine	18	10.0
other	12	6.7
Total	180	100.0

The above table depicts the physical issues faced by the respondents during menarche. Out of total respondents 50% respondents are facing abdominal pains during menstrual days, 33.3% respondents having leg & back cramping, 10% respondents facing migraine, 6.7% respondents face other issues like feeling of vomiting, itching at vaginal area etc. Therefore, it is concluded that most of the respondents are facing abdominal pains during menstruation cycle.

##### Blood flow quantity

Blood flow quantity	Frequency	Percent
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excessive bloodflow	54	30.0
less blood flow	39	21.7
very less blood flow	3	1.7
normal	84	46.7
Total	180	100.0

The above table depicts the blood flow of the respondents during menarche. 30% respondents have excessive blood flow, 21.7% respondents have less blood flow, 1.7% respondents have very less blood flow and 46.7% respondents have normal blood flow. Thus, it is summarized that most respondents have normal blood flow during menarche.

#### Regularity in menarche

Regularity in menarche	Frequency	Percent
always	72	40.0
sometimes	93	51.7
rarely	12	6.7
never	3	1.7
Total	180	100.0

Above table discusses the regularity in periods. It shows that 40% respondents have regular periods, 51.7% respondents sometimes having regular periods, 6.7% respondents rarely having regular periods and 1.7% respondents never having regular periods. Therefore, it is briefed that most respondents have the normal cycle of menstruation. And exceedingly rare respondents having irregular cycle of menstruation.

#### c. social obligation during menarche

Visiting temple during menstruation is not right.

Visiting temple is not right	Frequency	Percent
strongly agree	12	6.7
agree	90	50.0

undecided	30	16.7
disagree	24	13.3
strongly disagree	24	13.3
Total	180	100.0

The above table discusses the respondent's opinion about the statement- visiting temple during menstruation is right. Out of total respondents 6.7% respondents strongly agree on visiting temple during menstruation is not right, 50% respondents agree on visiting temple during menstruation is not right, 16.7% respondents have not decided anything, 13.3% respondents are disagreeing with the statement and 13.3% respondents are strongly disagree with the statement. Thus, it is concluded that most respondents agree with the statement that visiting temple during menstruation is not right.

touching anyone during menstruation is right.

touching anyone during menstruation is right	Frequency	Percent
strongly agree	12	6.7
agree	36	20.0
undecided	78	43.3
disagree	33	18.3
strongly disagree	21	11.7
Total	60	100.0

The above table shows views of respondents about the statement- touching anyone during menstruation is right. Out of total respondents 6.7% respondents strongly agree on touching anyone during menstruation is right, 20% respondents agree on touching anyone during menstruation is right, 43.3% respondent's undecided about touching anyone during menstruation is right, 18.3% respondents disagree on touching anyone during menstruation is right, 11.7 % respondents strongly disagree on touching anyone during menstruation is right. Therefore it is concluded that most of the respondents are unable to decide about the statement i.e., touching anyone during menstruation is right.



Permission of family to participate in religious activities during menstruation.

family allowed to participate in religious activities during menstruation	Frequency	Percent
yes	27	15.0
no	153	85.0
Total	180	100.0

The above table shows the respondents opinion about the statement family allows to participate in religious activities during menstruation. 15% of respondents' families allow them to participate in religious activities during menstruation and 85% of respondents' families have not allowed them to participate in any religious activity during menstruation.

Therefore, it is concluded that most of the respondent's family members are not allowing them to participate in religious activities during menstruation.

open talk on the topic of menstruation with your family or friends

Open talk with family & friends	Frequency	Percent
always	24	13.3
sometimes	60	33.3
rarely	54	30.0
never	42	23.3
Total	180	100.0

The above table shows the respondents' opinion about talking openly about menstruation with family or friends. Out of total respondents 13.3% respondents always talks about the menstruation with family or friends openly, 33.3% respondents sometimes talk about the menstruation with family or friends openly, 30% respondents rarely talk about the menstruation with family or friends openly and 23.3% respondents never talks about the menstruation with

family or friends openly. Therefore, it is concluded that majority of the respondents sometimes talk about menstruation with family and friends openly and followed by 30% respondents rarely talk freely about menstruation with their family and friends.

ashamed or afraid to talk about menstruation

are you ashamed or afraid to talk about menstruation	Frequency	Percent
always	84	46.7
sometimes	39	21.7
rarely	9	5.0
never	48	26.7
Total	180	100.0

The graph depicts that 46.7% respondents always feel ashamed or afraid to talk about menstruation, 21.7 % respondents sometimes feel ashamed or afraid to talk about menstruation, 5% respondents rarely feel ashamed or afraid to talk about menstruation, 26.7% respondents never feel ashamed or afraid to talk about menstruation.

### Results & Discussions:

The main aim of the present study was to understand the menstruation hygiene practices and their beliefs among tribal girls.

The result shows that the majority (53.3%) of the respondents sometimes use sanitary napkins. The study conducted in Nagpur, Maharashtra in 2022 shows that 74% respondents were using sanitary pads. The study conducted in Quetta, Pakistan in 2020 shows that 70% respondents were using sanitary pads. (Michael, J. et.al., 2020). As per the study conducted in Central India in 2016 total 98% respondents were using sanitary pads during their menstruation. (Dixit, S. et.al., 2016). As per the study conducted in 2022 in Central India, 73.79% girls were using sanitary pads. (Borkar, S. et.al., 2022)

In this study 55% of respondents never dry washed cloth in sunlight, they dry it in a dark room. According to the study conducted in Jammu district 96.9% respondents responded that they are not using proper washing cloths as well as they didn't have a drying mechanism. (Dhingra R.,

et.al., 2009) But contrary the study conducted by UNICEF in 2018 in Bhutan 75.2% of respondents dry their cloth pads in sunlight.

51.7% of respondents don't have toilets in the home, so they use an open place for it. As per the study conducted in South Gujrat in 2013 only 16% of girls have bathroom facility at home. (Shah, S., 2013)

In the present study, most respondents have several health issues during menstruation cycle in which abdominal pain is the highest physical problem they face. Along with this they had leg pain, leg, and back cramping etc. As per the study conducted in Jammu district 63.5% of respondents faced stomachache, 41.5% faced nausea, followed by leg pains and loss of appetite. (Dhingra R., et.al., 2009)

In the present study 85% of respondents do not get permission to take part in religious activities during menstruation. As per the study conducted in 2022 in Central India, 97.93% girls were not allowed to take part in any religious activity during menstruation. (Borkar, S. et.al., 2022) As per the study conducted by LexQuest Foundation in 2019 in Gujrat 84% girls were restricted from visiting holy places like temples etc. and 34% were restricted from engaging in social activities during menstruation. (Arora, A. et.al., 2019) As per the study conducted in 2022 in central India 97.93% respondents are not allowed to attend religious function during menarche. (Borkar et. al., 2022)

Most respondents don't talk openly about menstruation and most of them are ashamed or afraid to talk about this.

50% of respondents agree with the statement that visiting temple during menstruation is not right. As per the study 63.5% respondents reported that women must not enter into temple into menstruation.

<sup>1</sup><https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/nonpartisan-perspectives/sexual-and-reproductive-health-rights-srhr-in-india-part-1/>  
[https://nhm.gov.in/nhm\\_components/tribal\\_report/Executive\\_Summary.pdf](https://nhm.gov.in/nhm_components/tribal_report/Executive_Summary.pdf)  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285918466 Knowledge and Practices Related to Menstruation among Tribal Gujjar Adolescent Girls](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285918466_Knowledge_and_Practices_Related_to_Menstruation_among_Tribal_Gujjar_Adolescent_Girls)  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8611595/>  
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12905-019-0874-3>  
<https://njcmindia.com/index.php/file/article/view/978/754>  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1016/S0968-8080%2813%2941691-9?scroll=top&needAccess=true&role=tab>  
<https://www.cureus.com/articles/102905-study-of-menstrual-hygiene-practices-among-adolescent-girls-in-a-tribal-area-of-central-india>  
<https://lexquest.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/LQF-Assessing-the-Menstrual-Health-of-Tribal-Adolescent-Girls-in-Gujarat.pdf>  
<https://www.unicef.org/bhutan/media/211/file>  
<https://www.cureus.com/articles/102905-study-of-menstrual-hygiene-practices-among-adolescent-girls-in-a-tribal-area-of-central-india>