



**Eradication of Chhaupadi Pratha in mid-and far-western
region of Nepal – analysis of a tradition of being untouchable during
menstruation**

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to all women and girls, who have suffered, are suffering and may suffer in relation to harmful tradition like chhaupadi in mid-and-far western region of Nepal. My prayer is that this work will help to inspire them in moving ahead defeating that violence and encourage us for deed:

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice” (proverbs 31:8-9 NLT).

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Abstract

Chhaupadi is the tradition of being untouchable during menstruation in mid-and-far western region of Nepal. The menstruation is considered as sin, impure, unclean and untouchable according to Hindu religious belief. Therefore, menstruating women and girls isolate themselves from family and society during their period in chhau goth (menstruation hut) which is far from home for not to touch anyone and anything at home. This research has discussed and analyzed how those rural ladies are suffering from menstruation stigma and how they even accept death due to cold, suffocation, snakebite, animal attack and rape staying in hut because the hut is poorly constructed. This practice has banned them from eating healthy and hygienic food, not given proper access for cleaning like public tap, toilet and sanitation as well. Due to these poor menstrual sanitation and cleanliness results in reproductive health problems like urinary tract infection, vaginal scabies and abnormal discharge. This tradition violates human rights of women and girls, in the name of tradition, and it is at against of international treaties like CEDAW, Human Rights, and others. It is also banned and criminalized according to national law though it is still in practice despite these factors but good news is that slowly and gradually it is losing its strictness so decreasing in numbers of chhaupadi followers.

Key words: Chhaupadi pratha, menstruation, untouchable, violence, stigma, reproductive health, human rights, mid-and far- west Nepal.

List of abbreviations

CDO- Chief District Officer

CEDAW- Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women

CIA- Central Intelligence Agency

DIG- Deputy Inspector General of Police

HIOA- Høgskolen I Oslo og Akershus

NGO- Non-Governmental Organization

INGO- International Non-Governmental Organization

OHCHR- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UMN- United Mission to Nepal

UN- United Nations

UNICEF- United Nations Children's Emergency Fund

VDC- Village Development Committee

WCC- World Council of Churches

WHO- World Health Organization

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.0. Chapter Introduction

This chapter introduces the research background along with researcher's motive, research question and contextual background in terms of national law and international treaty based on harmful practices. Similarly, the presentation of running actions and programs against the harmful tradition lets the readers peep out present status of the tradition.

1.1. Background of Research

Menstruation is defined as a periodic, normal, healthy shedding of blood and tissues from the uterus that exit the body through female genital part/vagina. It symbolizes the beginning of womanhood. This is the key sign of reproductive health and a way of preparing pregnancy (UNICEF, 2008). However there is a tradition as menstruation taboo called "chhaupadi" in Far-western region in Nepal where menstruating women and girls are termed as impure and kept in separate place for certain period with some restriction. This is a custom that prohibits menstruating women from entering into home, touching male members, using public water-taps, participate in religious functions, and eat nutritious food including milk and others (Dahal et al. 2017). Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to present the findings about the key causes of problematic issues and credible resolutions in order to support for the eradication of this weird practice.

The term 'chhaupadi' is the combination of two local words in Achham 'chhau' and 'padi' where 'chhau' refers menstruation and 'padi' means a woman in local Raute tongue (Nilima & Tandon, 2011). Chhaupadi literally means "menstruating women", they are isolated from family, relatives and society considering 'impure' kept in small, cold and dark shed (Maharjan, 2010). Hence, the term chhaupadi refers to untouchable condition of menstruating women and girl. Likewise "pratha" means system or tradition. Therefore, the tradition of isolating women during menstruation is called chhaupadi pratha/ tradition. It is common for women who are considered, "impure" and "untouchable" during the days of menstruation in Nepal. Everything they touch during the time of their menstruation can be considered impure (khadka, 2014). This tradition

forbids women from the participation in their normal activities while menstruating as they are considered impure. During this period women are strictly prohibited to touch men and everything inside house even to enter the courtyard of their own home because “they are considered “impure” or “unclean” or “untouchable” during menstruation and postpartum period” (Maharjan, 2010). They are forced to stay in a separate and unsafe hut/cow-shed which is also called ‘chhau hut’ (menstruation hut). According to this practice, “when a girl has her first time menstruation, she is removed out from her family members for 11-15 days. In the case of mature women, she stays in a shed for 5 days and married women to stay for only 4 days. The most troubling fact is that the confined women do not get nutritious food. They believe that they should not drink and eat milk, curd, yogurt and other dairy product (ibid). The environment within the place is generally unhygienic, suffocating and unclean without proper light, and ventilation. The unhygienic nature of hut means that women and girls are vulnerable to infectious diseases (Dahal et al. 2017, p. 5). Additionally, “It is believed that God or Goddess may be angered if the practice is violated, which could result in a shorter life, death of livestock or destruction of crops. It is believed that if a woman touches fruits, they will fall before they are ripe; if, she fetches water, the well will dry up” (OHCHR, 2011, p. 2). This means, if they don’t follow the tradition their whole system of living circumstance will be messed up. Therefore by the fear of harm of entire family and crops due to the anger of God or Goddess they don’t dare to interrupt the traditions. In this sense, we can say, this kind of unscientific practice is violence against women in the name of social practice.

In this specific practice adolescent girls are forbidden by going to school during menstruation that hampers their education, because of this practice many girls are having fall out in comparison of boys (khadka, 2014). Menstruating ladies are neither accepted for participation in religious ceremonies, nor are they permissible for nutritious food though they are still expected to participate in hard labor, as working in fields, collecting firewood, grass and so on (Gautam, 2011). This tradition is especially influenced by Hindu religion practitioners (Kandel, Raj Bhandari, & Lamichanne, 2010) and considering these menstrual ladies as impure and untouchable is the reason of religious and superstitious beliefs (GC & Koirala, 2013). There are several reports of many young girls and new mothers’ death inside hut during chhaupadi from the wild animals’ attacks, snake bite, extreme cold, suffocations and others (khadka, 2014). It is quite obvious that this traditional practice is extremely dangerous and harmful in those female’s

lives who are facing practically in their day-to-day survives. The NGOs, INGOs like UN women, Restless Development Nepal, Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC Nepal) and other humanitarian organizations are working on it to abolish this evil practice by providing different kinds of awareness programs, human rights, health and personal hygiene, sanitary and so on.

This research will address the key reason of this evil practice and the action of government to eradicate the practice. How the situation of rural women and their health and how they take the process of menstruation cycle. How they feel about the practice and what are the challenges of this practice.

1.2. Research Question:

- How the rural women from far-western part of Nepal are facing menstruation stigma in relation with chhaupadi pratha (being untouchable tradition during menstruation)?

1.3. Motivation of Study

I belong to the Eastern part of Nepal where there is not the practice of chhaupadi, so personally, I didn't feel such kind of huge difficulty in my life through childhood but I have heard about this when I was young. I used to feel very bad when I got to know more additional things about it. It is really a bad circumstance to have this kind of discrimination over female. So, I am motivated to go in depth behind the truth regarding this practice. Actually, my interest in this area was more increased after I came to Norway as an international student at Vid University because I see equality for women in Norwegian society but in my country still there is evil practice in the name of social practice. It should be eliminated. This is matter of human rights, every people have a right to live with human dignity.

1.4. Contextual Background

1.4.1. Chhaupadi Practice Area

Chhaupadi is a kind of traditional practice that restricts the women and girls from daily activities and banned from touching others during menstruation. Menstruation is considered as impurity and sin in this tradition so women and girls are sent to stay in separate hut which is called chhaupadi goth (menstruation hut). Especially, chhaupadi is practiced in some districts of far-western region of Nepal as Achham, Bajhang, Bajura, Baitadi, Doti, Dadeldhura, Darchula, Kanchanpur and Kailali and in Mid-west such as Humla, Jumla, Mugu, Dailekh, Jajarkot and surkhet districts (Khadka, 2014). This practice obligates some boundaries upon women, young teenager girls who have just started their menstruation and those mothers who have just delivered a baby. This period lasts for two weeks for the first time menstruating girls and for women who has just given a birth to baby. This practice restricts all adult ladies from 4 to 5 days every month during menstruation (Kandel, Raj Bhandari, & Lamichanne, 2010). In this practice, as mentioned above menstruating women are lined to touch male members of the house including their father, brother and husband. If they someone accidentally, one must be purified with cow urine, which is considered holy liquid (United Nations, 2011). Women are just limited in small, cold sheds or huts, sometimes together with cattle and goats. They are not permitted to enter in the surrounding areas of their house (Ranabhat et al. 2015). These women are prohibited to consume nutritious foods such as milk and meat items except with dry foods, salt and rice. In this tradition women are not only kept in physically challenging situation but also treated in ill-mannered (Crawford, Menger, & Kaufman, 2014).

1.4.2. Chhaupadi in Accordance of International Treaty

In the Universal declaration of human rights, article 25 has been written, “everyone has a right to live standard life adequate health care, security, food, clothing, housing and necessary social services” (United Nations, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights). World conference on women’s rights, the Beijing declaration and platform for action has agreed on this issue that “women and girls’ human rights are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedom” (Beijing +20 Human Rights). The Vienna Declaration and the Program of Action (paragraph 38) called for “the eradication of any conflict which may arise

between the rights of women and the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices, cultural prejudices and religious extremism” (Women’s Rights are Human Rights, 2014). From all of these documents it is quite clear that any kind of tradition or cultural practices should not be obstacle in women’s’ rights for equality and their freedom. Since chhaupadi as traditional practice violates the rights of women as human beings and as a member of a reproductive age group therefore this practice is a case of direct violation of all these international laws and declarations. Nepal is also a state party to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Its preamble shapes that the discrimination against women is an obstacle to the equal participation in political, social, economic and cultural life. CEDAW also demands upon states to work toward eliminating prejudices and customary practices based on the idea of inferiority of women or on stereotyped roles for women. According to the provision of Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (United Nations, 1979), chhaupadi is obvious violation of women’s and girl’s rights. Being a state party of CEDAW, The Nepal government is concerned about the recommendation from CEDAW/C/NPL/CO/4-5 in Para18c “promptly enact the draft law on harmful social practices; ensure that it covers all forms of such practices; ensure full implementation of the law without delay; and monitor its effective implementation” (CEDAW, August, 2011, p. 4). The CEDAW/C/NPL/CO/6 also mentions continuously ensuring the victims of harmful practices can file complaints without fear of revenge or stigmatization and that they have access to effective remedies and victim support, such as legal, social, medical, and psychological assistances and shelters (CEDAW, 2018). Hence, Nepal is a state party of CEDAW so have to be responsible organization for addressing the recommendations in an active and organized way.

1.4.3. National Law, Government Policy and Actions against Chhaupadi

According to national law, chhaupadi is illegal because government has realized that this tradition is truly harmful. Nobody can force to women and girls to stay in chhaupadi goth (menstruation hut) if anybody does this he/she will be punished. This is declared in Nepalese constitution. On May 2, 2005, The Supreme Court illegalized chhaupadi and issued a directive to the government to formulate laws eliminating the practice. In 2008, the Ministry of Women,

Child and Social Welfare promulgated guidelines (Chhaupadi Pratha Unmulan Nirdeshika/Eradication Directory of Chhaupadi Tradition) for nationwide eradication of chhaupadi. The article 20 of the Interim Constitution 2007 states, No one shall be exploited in the name of any custom, tradition and usage or whatsoever. The constitution of Nepal 2072 (2015 AD) Article 38 (3) also has the same provision. Likewise, the Civil Criminal Code 2017 Section 168 (3) outlaws the chhaupadi in a strict way by stipulating a three-month imprisonment or a fine of 3,000 Nepali rupees (\$26) or both for those who force women into chhaupadi. In case of civil servant keeping women in chhaupadi, penalty will be three additional month jail (Budhathoki & Pokhrel, 2017). More recent on December 25, 2019, Home Ministry of Nepal commanded to the Chief District Officers to end chhaupadi practice (My Republica, 28 chhaugoths demolished in a single ward, January, 2020). These are the laws, policies of Nepal government which seems enough to eradicate the harmful tradition but implementation part is pathetic. There is the huge gap between law making and law implementation along with continuation of follow-up programs and super tendency. The strict laws help to change the form of violence but not reform the situation because most ‘people’s mindset has not been changed yet’ (Budhathoki & Pokhrel, 2017).

In press meet of (International event to discourage chhaupadi, February, 2020), Minister for Women, Children and Senior Citizen Parbat Gurung, opined the menstruation need to be treated from the human rights perspective to achieve gender equality. It will be great help to eliminate chhaupadi tradition. With the aim of building a civilized society by ending all sorts of discrimination including chhaupadi, government has intensified a campaign against chhaupadi. And the campaign has been initiated as signature campaign in different places like Sija, Hima, Kanakasundari, Tila, Tatopani, Guthichaur and Patarasi municipalities in Jumla district where the chhau culture is very common. According to Police Inspector Krishna Hari Khadka, in-charge of Rarahil Police Post, different police units have been ruling and taking care of campaign (My Republica, January, 2020).

Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Tarini Lamsal, Chief of Sudur Paschim (Far-west) Province Police Office, mentioned that almost 2551 chhau sheds has been destroyed till the date, 2096 chhau sheds in Achham, 172 in Kailali, 117 in Bajura, 67 in Doti, 64 in Bjhang, 24 in Kanchanpur and 11 in Dadeldhura districts. Legal action will be taken for those family members

who suffer death in chhau sheds, informed by DIG Lamsal (Deuba, January, 2020). They mentioned, the campaign is running positively in a smooth way in cooperation with local peoples and representatives; mostly women are participating for the campaign. It shows positive hope for the eradication of chhaupadi in near future. This is the very good initiation of government however, to reach the goal it is necessary to take it in serious manner and keep continue to follow up the activities. Researcher believes that, it is a better picture (displaying below) to capture the current scenario of the campaign ruling by Nepal government for destroying chhau hut.



Police destroying chhaupadi sheds in rural area of Achham in this picture, published in January 20, 2020 in daily paper MyRepublica. Photo:Khamma Khatri/Republica.

1.4.4. Current Chhaupadi Status

Researcher would like to include the latest chhaupadi-related reports, news and incidents that are coming out during this thesis writing period. Researcher considers this media coverage is highly relevant sources of data for this thesis; it was published in “The Kathmandu Post” national daily news Kathmandu, Nepal (Chhaupadi Persists, September, 2020) where there is the clear picture of chhaupadi hut and a girl sitting inside there.



(This is an example of chhaupadi-hut published by 'The Kathmandu Post'- national daily news Kathmandu, on September 24, 2020. In this file photo, a girl is sitting inside a Chaupadi shed in the hills of Legudsen village in Achham District in western Nepal. Navesh Chitrakar/Reuters)

Some women use this kind (shown in the picture) of chhaupadi hut during menstruation but some other women who doesn't have this kind of hut then, they use cattle shed as menstruation hut. It is published in daily news My Republic, January 9, 2020 reported by Dhan Bahadur Buda, "Unlike other districts where chhauapdi tradition is in practice, chhau sheds are not build outside the houses here in Jumla (the name of district) Instead, girls and women are forced to share space with cattle at the sheds meant for cows and goats when they bleed" (In Jumla, menstruating women are forced to stay in cowsheds, 2020). They are restricted as other women from other places' chhaupadi followers and cannot mix up with others during menstruation because it is considered as impure as a common attribute in each place where the tradition is prevalence.

According to the news published in last 2nd of December by leading daily tabloid in Nepal, a Nepalese woman found died in course of observing the chhaupadi in Achham, the district in Sudur Paschim Province (Far-west Province). According to police's investigation the deceased has been identified as Parbati Rawat, 21, of Siddheshwori 21, Sanfebagar municipality-3. According to Achham Police, chhaupadi death is not new in Achham (My Republica, Dec. 2019). And good news is that this is the last death case of chhaupadi at present. This shows

somehow progressive situation in controlling death cases during chhaupadi in comparison of previous years. Moreover, this case is also the first one for taking action by government based on national law.

The government of Nepal, NGO's, INGO's and many humanitarian organizations are working to reduce this practice, though this kind of heart wrenching post or news comes continuously. More recently, in 2017 a new law has been passed in Nepal has criminalized the Chhaupadi and anyone who forces women to practice Chhaupadi have to face imprisonment up to 3 months or 3000 Nepali rupees (\$26) or both. According to the latest report by Nepal Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (NJMR), the majority of the girls 77% of the participants practiced chhaupadi, including 4% exiled to traditional Chhau shed, 63% to livestock sheds, and 14% to courtyard outside their home and 28% stayed inside house, yet practiced the some form of menstruation taboo. And most exiled girls 97.4% were restricted from eating dairy product. Three of the girls were physically abused; nine were bitten by snake (Khadka & Karki, March, 2019). Similarly, one more research published in December 2017 reports that 50% of participants still believed that their family and society will get cursed by God if they don't observe the tradition associated with menstruation (Yadav et al, 2018). This report also declares that participants still practice self-purification after menstruation by sprinkling gold water over themselves. These recent researches resemble the reality of chhaupadi practicing societies in particular places of Nepal.

One of the prominent daily papers published in Nepal "The Himalayan Times" on June 13, 2018, a woman from a rural municipality of Bajura district in far western Nepal is staying in a den in the forest after group of women activists of her locality destroyed her chhaupadi shed in a proposal of declaring the Chhaupadi-free village. According to her, women in her village agreed to activists as they promised to work against them who encouraged the chhaupadi but sadly, these women were forced to stay in a plastic tent or den in the jungle during menstruation and those activists were nowhere around to support them. Many villages are declared as the chhaupadi-free villages just on paper but in reality, women are being forced to stay in the den and plastic hut which is even harder than before in these villages (The Himalayan Times, June, 2018). And recently, news published as "28 Chhaugoths (menstruation huts) demolished in a single ward" on January 14, 2020, when Home Ministry of Nepal sent directives to the Chief

District Officers to end chhaupadi practice on December 25, 2019. Then, a campaign has launched to destroy chhau-huts in presence of police and people's representatives. This campaign destroyed 28 chhau-huts at one ward alone of Badikedar rural municipality under the campaign to demolish Chhau-huts. According to Chief District Officer (CDO) of Doti district; Tek Narayan Poudel, police personnel have been organized at harmonization of local bodies to make the campaign a success (My Republica, January, 2020). These two types of news show that it is a good initiation of abolishing chhaupadi practice by destroying chhau hut and declared the chhaupadi-free municipality but they only destroyed chhau hut, not the inside unawareness of the people in first news so they compel to stay in den and tent's hut again. The researcher wishes the second news will not follow the foot print of first one. In rural Nepal, features like silence, myths, taboos and stigma around menstruation is predominant in comparison to urban Nepal, so it is essential to go beyond destruction of chhau-hut, as destigmatization of menstruation. Menstruation stigma need to be faded out through the transformation of environment and communication of information about menstruation. Otherwise, they will get more suffer lacking chhau-hut, they become compel to stay under the open sky during menstruation. In one of a recent research interview in Achham district, an owner of chhau hut called Sita Budha, 40, can't see other option than to stay at hut and explain her situation that 'God may be angry then punish them if they stay inside their homes, the police may arrest them if they stay at the hut', so this is very hard condition for them (Adhikari, 2020). Therefore, it seems necessary to change the mindset of the people than destroying the hut. It looks hard, can't be changed in overnight but it is possible to change with time being but need to follow the right strategy which is suitable for them as a strategy of 'think globally and act locally'.

1.5. Health Impacts of Chhaupadi Tradition

Chhaupadi has several health negative impacts through it. Most importantly, menstrual ladies have to stay cold in winter and hot in summer inside the narrow and congested hut. This can be cause of pneumonia, diarrhea, chest infection, suffocation, and hypothermia. They are not allowed to eat healthy and nutritious food instead they must go to work on field, carrying heavy loads, digging, collecting firewood, grass etc. (United Nations, 2011). So they come to be so weak without proper diets of heavy work that can be cause of prolapsed uterus. A mother in her

post-partum period becomes so delicate though she must look after her new born baby by herself. The poor hygienic food and vulnerably existing condition may raise the neonatal and maternal mortality rate. Animal attack, snakebite, molestation and rape cases are the other threatening facts in staying chhaupadi hut (ibid) that can push the ladies in untimed death. So many incidents are occurred in past due to these reasons. They are not allowed to use common taps that means they don't have proper access of water and sanitation that can be the cause of many flue and long term dieses, in their life. It's just unimaginable helpless life they are surviving through health and psychological aspects.

1.6. Scope and Limitation of the Research

The purpose of this research is not to portray all Nepalese women as victims of chhaupadi pratha but to portray the realities in which how the remote areas' Nepalese women are compel to follow this practice. Therefore, the prime focus of this study is to depict the reality of how the remote regions' female are stigmatized and affected their health due to this evil practice. What are the actions of Nepal government to abolish the practice? Though, the female from other part of the country are not victimized in the name of chhaupadi (untouchable being). This study is fully dedicated to those women who are victims of chhaupadi tradition. Therefore, it may ignore the realities about rich, educated women of other parts or urban areas.

1.7. Thesis Outline

First Chapter presents the background of research, research question and motivation about why I take this issue as a thesis. Besides these, contextual background of the chhaupadi practiced area, current situation of chhaupadi and contexts of national laws, international treaties about human rights, and women and girls rights. Health impacts upon this practice then scope and limitation of research.

Second Chapter is concerned to the theory and perspectives which depict the brief information on the theory and perspective of stigma, feminism, social justice and empowerment.

Third chapter is about methodology that explains about the methodological approach regarding this thesis which includes data collection and data analysis, coding and categorizing and ethical consideration.

Forth Chapter associates with the literature review which deals with the menstruation, chhaupadi and menstruation stigma in order to respond the research question and gives more understanding about the research topic.

Fifth Chapter includes presentation of findings and critical analysis. It unpacks the outcomes with the help of theoretical aspects. In this chapter the researcher has tried to depict the main issue of the project through the analysis of stories.

Sixth Chapter portrays the discussion which will be overall interaction of findings, and analysis.

Seventh Chapter finally presents conclusion that summarizes the general overview of this thesis in brief then presents some recommendations.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework

2.0. Chapter Introduction

This chapter deals with the theoretical framework of this research. Theories on stigma, feminism, empowerment and justice are used to evaluate and analyze the findings of studies. This theoretical framework will be useful to gaze into the chhaupadii victims' inner feelings, experiences, difficulties, their sufferings and stigma and overcome with them.

2.1. Stigma Theory

Stigma is defined as a social mark of disgrace often based on appearance. There are various forms of stigma social, physical, psychological and health related stigma. Stigmatization is the situation of individual is disqualified in a kind of social acceptance. Especially, it is based on race, sex, physical deformities etc. The experience of negative social judgment or blame is the source of stigma and cultural context influence and reveals it (Weiss, Ramakrishna, & Somma, 2006). In context of far-western region of Nepal also menstruation has been marked as impurity and untouchable condition because of social, cultural and gender domination, then blames of misfortune. It is as described in the article Health-related stigma: Rethinking concepts and inventions: -

Stigma is typically a social process, experienced or anticipated, characterized by exclusion, rejection, blame or devaluation those results from experience, perception or reasonable anticipation of an adverse social judgment about person or group...other forms of stigma, which results from adverse social judgments about enduring identity apart from health-related conditions e.g. race, ethnicity, sexual preferences (Weiss, Ramakrishna, & Somma, 2006, p. 280).

This means stigma is associated with contrary social judgment about person or group that generates social exclusion and rejection or blame. The judgment may not be always health-

related; it is connected also with racial, ethnical, sexual identical circumstances. The case of menstrual women are the exactly the same in relation to chhaupadi tradition in Nepal, it is based on gender or sexual and cultural preferences. While men and women are equal creation of God (Genesis 1:27) but society counts male as superior and female as inferior for domination in the name of different cultural practices, religion and so on. It comes from the bitter experience of marginalization, denunciation and devaluation of the person or a group. The menstruation has been defined as a normal and natural shedding of blood from female organ vagina as a sign of reproductive health and pregnancy as mentioned before but the society in far-west Nepal has been taken it as menstrual taboo so they exclude girls and women during the menstruation period. This is how girls and women are victimized by the menstruation stigma in far-west Nepal.

Stigma is an attribute that makes a person diverse from others in a social category, and it reduces the person to a spoiled one. It is actually a distinct kind of relation between an attribute and the stereotype that causes a person to be a humiliated by others. It can be understood in three different categories; physical differences or abominations blemish of individual character deficiencies, and tribal stigma of gender, race, sexual orientation, nationality or religion (Goffman, 1963). The settings of all these three different categorized features are perceived in relation to chhaupadi tradition in far-western region of Nepal because menstruation blood is considered as 'bodily disgrace', it is taken as 'blemish character' assuming the menstruation is a 'sin' and menstruation blood is flaws women's femininity. Therefore, it is quite apparent the menstruation stigma is facing by rural women in certain region of Nepal. (Yang, et al. 2007) define the stigma is a social aspect with multiple dimensions like engagement of social actors, involving cultural meanings, roles and types in article (Culture and stigma: Adding moral experience to stigma theory, 2007). Since, the chhaupadi also is a structure of socio-cultural practices, roles and beliefs as well.

2.2. Empowerment Theory

Empowerment simply means the increase of power in human life. J. Rappaport defines, "Empowerment suggests a sense of control over one's life in personality, cognition, and

motivation. It expresses itself at the level of feelings, at the level of ideas about self-worth, at the level of being able to make a difference in the world around us” (Dietrich, Reflections on Core Aspects of Diaconal Theory, 2014, p. 21). As a same way in the book of Diaconia it is defined, “Empowerment is a process that brings with it a change of attitude and a change of life; this process belongs to those who used to be more or less passive receivers of social help” (Nissen, 2012, p. 27). Above these definitions prevail the empowerment gives strength and confidence to people in the level of feelings, ideas and attitudes that help to change the life of people from one stage to another. It also concerns with personal control over behavior, reasoning, inspiration and ambition which is all about human emotions that make able to change the world around us because “Empowerment is the notion of power and it requires two conditions; power can change and power can expand” (ibid p. 29). It means when people get empowered become more confident that makes them able to share/change and expand the power rather than being silence. They can raise their voice for them in against of violence and injustice. In the case of this thesis research topic, the victim of menstruation taboo is from the far-west rural areas women and girls who are in backward and marginalized so they need to have diaconal empowerment that helps to uplift their life and reality. If they are transformed and empowered, confidently they could challenge this evil practices and protest against it. Through the theological perspective, “Empowerment refers to the biblical understanding of creation that every human being is created in the image of God, with capacities and abilities, independent of their apparent social situation” (LWF, 2009, p. 45). According to this definition of empowerment, human is the creation of God with the distinctive abilities and capacities to live in social situation. Making people able to handle the social position in an effective way is the form of empowerment so there is no discrimination, rather equal opportunity to all sexes, races, and castes in liberation. In this research case educational, social and economic empowerment is base for the transformation or abolishes this immoral social practice.

2.3. Feminist Theory

The ‘feminism’ is a wide-ranging word. It is understood as the series of social and political movements and ideologies that aim to express, decide, and institute the corresponding rights of political, social, and economical segment for all sexes without biasness. The people who either

believe on ideology of feminism or engaged in such movements for changes based upon the philosophy of feminism are considered as feminists. It's being a broad term, feminism and feminist theory do not have a single school of thought; various philosophers regarding this theory have their own meaning and insight like radical, liberal and so on. According to Simon de Beauvoir, gender is 'constructed' not 'born' so female are fabricated as 'other' or 'second sex' (Beauvoir, 2010). In this research, menstruation is fabricated as sin. Toril Moi has outlines three principles of Beauvoir through her review of 'Second Sex' and states that:-

In the second Sex Beauvoir formulates three principles and applies them to women's situation in the world. First is her foundational insight that man 'is the Subject, he is the Absolute: she is the 'other''. Man incarnates humanity; women, by virtue of being female, deviate from the human norm. The consequence is that women constantly experience a painful conflict between their humanity and their femininity (Moi, 2010).

This means her first principle is about the foundational insight where man considered him as a subject of absolute and the women object or other. Female are depart from human norm just because of her ladylikeness. And as a second principle Beauvoir has talked about women's freedom and happiness like men, then third principle about femininity that is the symbol of un-free or patriarchy (ibid). Simon de Beauvoir has ground breaking thought about gender to portrait the exact picture of women's condition in the world which can be related with this research subject of chhaupadi tradition.

2.4. Justice Theory

Poverty, illiteracy and inequality are burning example of prevalent injustice (Watts, L., & Hodgson, D., 2019). Injustice means inequality and unfairness, which is just because of illiteracy, poverty and other several drawbacks. Chhaupadi is one example of widespread injustice. Justice or social justice is mostly defined as the fair and justifiable distribution of power, resources, and compulsion in society to all people, no matter of their race, ethnicity, gender, and religious background (Bos, 2003). Bible says, "Speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice" (proverbs 31:8-9 NLT) (NLT Study Bible, 2009). This means to confirm the justice, need to speak up or break up the silence. It is important to be the voice of

voiceless to see the result with getting justice by them. Therefore, justice means the voice of voiceless, power for powerless people. Due to the silence of rural women, they are confined inside the chain of chhaupadi like tradition; to come out from this suffering they need justice.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.0. Chapter Introduction

This chapter will give an overview about the process of methodology used by the researcher. This chapter describes the qualitative research method, data collection and analysis, coding and conceptualizing, ethical consideration and limitation of study to give some insight.

3.1. Research Design

According to Creswell, qualitative research examines how groups and individuals understand a particular social or human problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 4). Therefore the qualitative approach is relevant for this research to describe and analyze people's perception, views and experiences on the chhaupadi tradition. Qualitative research methods investigate not only the question for what, where, and when but also how and why. Questions of how and why are vital to know the sensations being researched (Silverman, 2006). Hence, this research aims to explore crucial factors behind the practicing chhaupadi tradition in mid-and far-west region of Nepal. The qualitative research methods include a wide range of data collection and analysis perspectives. It does not just include statistical numbers but also involve understanding of the context, feelings, utterances of people, and their behavior and views as well. Qualitative methods are most rational when a research aims to answer how and why questions of the people and to analyze meanings, believes, traditions, cultures, and behaviors (ibid). Therefore, the qualitative approach is the most practical for this study as researcher intends to answer the research question, how rural women are facing the menstruation stigma in relation to chhaupadi tradition in mid-and far-west region in Nepal and which includes analyzing people's perceptions on the chhaupadi, feelings of the chhaupadi-practicing ladies, their behavior and views as well.

3.2. Data Collection and Data Analyzing

In this research, I haven't gone through interview because it was not possible to visit Nepal and gather information due to pandemic COVID-19. However, I became able to collect all data which I needed through secondary resources. All in all, I have used secondary data for this research. I have collected 10 different stories of the chhaupadi victims from tributary documents for this research during August 2020 to September 2020 from different authentic sources and presented in a narrative form. I have collected other information via authentic websites, newspapers, different books, articles, reports and some information from the previously done researches. I have analyzed the one of the stories of the chhaupadi-practicing ladies which have been already published by online portal (Blink Now, 2017) and three of stories from previously collected in Achham, Nepal by Sarjana (KC, 2018) for the purpose of her master thesis during August 2018 to September 2018, then finally rest of six stories also from previously gathered by Nirajan (Khadka, 2014) for the purpose of his master thesis during July 2013 to August 2013 in Achham district, Nepal. It seems to be very reliable as well as contextual examples for the issues. I believe this will support to defend my master thesis. It seems to me that the experiences and the feelings of the related people are very crucial materials because they are expert themselves for the sake of their lives experiences. I used database for searching articles from Google scholar, report from NGOs like UN, Restless Development etc. and news reports about the chhaupadi tradition published from national/international news portal. I happened to select the stories of the people as data information in order to put my own reflection in relation to stigma, feminism, justice and empowerment theories because the selected stories contain their experiences, feelings, thoughts, emotions, and rights. More importantly, the characters of the stories themselves are experts for their lives and the way they faced in the family, community and the society. This research will sense their stories so that it might extract the findings which have been overshadowed.

3.2.1. Presentation of Stories

Story	Status	Occupation	Area
1) Story A	Single (18 years old)	Student	Achham

2) Story B	Married (29years old)	Housewife/agriculture	Achham
3) Story C	Married (with a newborn)	Housewife/agriculture	Achham
4) Story D	Single	Student	*
5) Story E	Married	Housewife/agriculture	Achham
6) Story F	Married	Housewife/agriculture	Achham
7) Story G	Married	Community mobilizer	Achham
8) Story H	Married	Housewife/agriculture	Duni, Achham
9) Story I	Single	Agriculture	Duni, Achham
10) Story J	Married	Housewife/agriculture	Duni, Achham

3.3. Coding and Categorizing

Coding is the process of placing data into organized sections that seem related and assigning labels or themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 193). With the analysis of qualitative data, coding is a process whereby the data are broken down into their component parts and those parts are then labels (Bryman, 2012, p. 13). Therefore, codes are building blocks of theme and after coding, skimming paragraphs those broken components are grouped clearly in categorization (ibid). For this research, Coding is one of the crucial parts for indicating particular aspect of the issues, for instance, if I show the sense of stigmatizing and stigmatized, I need to code particular statement which represents the subjectivity of stigma. Despite this, since this research belongs to qualitative research, for thematic analysis on data, sometimes there should be coded particular statements so that researcher could get findings. Unless the researcher reduces the amount of data collected- for example, in the case of qualitative data by grouping textual material into categories like themes-it is more or less impossible to interpret the material (ibid, p.13). On this basis, I have categorized the stories of chhaupadi-practicing ladies as textual material according to theme of stigma, empowerment, justice and feminist point of view. These stories have been categorized in terms of chhaupadi practiced by first time period girls, mature and married women then women after giving birth or postpartum period. Thematic analysis includes detecting critical themes from the study and interpreting them into one another. The theme captures something

important about the data related to research question and denotes some level of decorative reply or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a plan which focuses on reading the results various times, coding and finding the themes, comparing these themes and pinpointing the crucial features intertwined with each theme (ibid). As (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) suggest, I will find the theme through checking the views that have been repeated several times, and similarities and differences between these themes. Repetition is one of the easiest ways to pinpoint a theme by knowing topics that occur and occur.

3.4. Ethical Consideration

This research use the secondary data as the stories of chhaupadi-practicing ladies and the stories are already collected by earlier researcher for their academic purpose of thesis and could be found as uploaded file in archive in website; therefore, there is no any question of the confidentiality in the case of names and other things of the stories' characters. I am not sure that the characters of these stories are factious or genuine but I have put their names as same as already they are entitled.

3.5. Limitation of Study

Chhaupadi tradition is in practice in several districts in mid-and far-western region of Nepal. In circumstances of this study is just for the purpose of master thesis with limited time and resources so this study lacks the comprising information about chhaupadi in entire mid-and far-west region of Nepal. It is just limited with the specific area called Achham district of far-west Nepal.

Chapter Four

Literature Review

4.0. Chapter Introduction

This chapter will review the different literatures based on chhaupadi tradition and consequence of social stigma due to exposure during menstruation period. It has been reviewed six articles in total; all of them are related with chhaupadi and social stigma. Stigma, badly affects for the women's' health and ruined their life.

4.1. Chhaupadi Understanding

The word chhaupadi originally comes from Achham's Raute dialect. Chhau stands for menstruation and Padi stands for woman as described above. Then, chhaupadi pratha especially prevails in mid-and far-west Nepal. There are some literatures related chhaupadi among them few literatures are reviewed in this paper.

Chhaupadi literally means "Menstruation women". They are secluded from family, relatives, and society and kept them in a small cold and dark shed where most often cattle kept in other time. They are considered "impure" or "unclean" or "untouchable" during menstruation and post-delivery periods. According to this practice, when a girl has her menarche, she is isolated from family members for 11-15 days. For the matured woman's case, she stays in a shed for 5 days. The most upsetting point in this tradition is that the confined women do not get nutritious food because they believe that they should not drink and eat milk, curd, yogurt, and other dairy products during this period. In addition of this, they create their bed on some hay and do not get good care. It is reported that many infants die during their stay in shed with their mothers. Even if those infants broke free their fate of death, they had serious health issues and complications that developed on account of hyperthermia. Some women have pneumonia and other viral infections due to cold and unhealthy diet. Others are killed by snakebite (Maharjan, 2010).

(Amgain, 2012), in '*Social dimension of Chhaupadi system: A study from Achham district, Far west Nepal*', remarks that chhaupadi system limits women's competency to live a safe, healthy and sophisticated life by banning women from anything to touch during their menstruation period. Women are considered as impure during their menstruation period. It is violation of human rights and women rights as well. It restricts women from human development such as capabilities to be survived, to be nourished, to be educated, to get health facilities and capabilities to be free from social slavery and superstitions. In the name of tradition, this practice continued from generation to generation without modification. She argues, local and regional socio-political system, caste system, and poverty are the main objects to transmit the tradition from one generation to another.

The Article '*Chhue, Chhaupadi and Chueekula Pratha*' references that the chhaupadi pratha is the discriminatory practice against women during their menstrual period and post-partum period in Nepal. Through the observation and open discussion studies were carried out in the areas of the mid- and far-western regions of the country. The calling or naming method of this tradition is known as *Chhue*, in Dadeldhura, *Chhaupadi* in Achham and *Chueekula* in Bajhang districts. This practice is continued through socio-cultural norms, social taboos, and superstition. During these periods women are considered impure or unclean and prohibited from taking part in many normal activities of their daily lives. These women and society believe that if they take break from such practice, have to bear bad omens by themselves, family, or society. This practice is vandalism of human rights and gender discrimination against women and children. This practice leads to bundles of negative effects on health, education and socio-economic development of them and the whole country (Kandel, Raj Bhandari, & Lamichanne, 2010).

In the study, "*Chhaypadi practice in Nepal- analysis of ethical aspects*", it is explained that chhaupadi practice exists in mid- and far- western region of Nepal, involves isolation of women during menstruation treating as impure. The practice is derived from Hindu tradition that relates to the secretion connected with menstruation and child birth. It is well-accepted practice among community elders, husbands, mother-in-law, traditional healers, and priests (who have the profound influence in the community) and also the practicing women in many cases. The continuation of this practice is a way of preserving a tradition. It is maintaining through connecting with purity that aims to please the deities believed to take care of community. The

tradition concerns with the community norm in the belief that individual freedom is less important in community. This article analyzes that this tradition is the case of women-suppression and matter of enforced social tradition. It violates the rights of women as human beings and as member of a reproductive age group because they have to spend 5 days every month in narrow, dark, tight and congested hut having cold dirty floors. It impacts on psychological well-being of women and girls. The isolation from their family, friends and social exclusion transports them towards depression, low self-esteem, and disempowerment among girls. Moreover, there is a fear of sexual abuse and assault at night alongside the attack of wild animals and snake bites. This practice exists because of illiteracy, ignorance, traditional belief system, gender discrimination and power difference. So, the only way to abolish this practice is through mass awareness and education at the individual and community level (Kadariya & Aro, 2015).

Amatya et al. (2018), define that menstruation is a biological process though ironically, in many parts of the world, it is steeped in silence, taboos, and stigma. In south Asian countries, a range of restrictions, regarding food, school attendance, household chores and social events, are retained on menstruating women and girls. Menstrual hygiene practices are very poor and many girls miss school due to menses throughout Africa and Asia. Nepal is one of them where in the name of chhaupadi tradition women and girls are isolated from family and society during menstruation, restricted from several daily activities. Therefore, with the feeling of abandonment, insecurity, guilt, and humiliation for being “impure” and “untouchable” they suffered mentally and psychologically. Due to the living in an unhygienic livestock shed or traditional Chhau shed, it increases physical problems of likelihood diarrhea and dehydration, hypothermia, reproductive tract and urinary tract infections. The practice has to be followed during postnatal period, that can lead to both mother and infant death arising from unnecessary bleeding, septic shock due to lack of access to health care. The figure of neonatal and maternal mortality is high in the far-west regions where chhaupadi is common; it may be the reason of chhaupadi tradition (Amatya et al., 2018).

Article *‘Why Menstruation Stigma And Exile Are Still Issues In Nepal’* describes that chhaupadi is a centuries-old tradition constructed on the basis that menstruating women are ‘impure’ and will bring disaster and destruction to a village or community, unless they isolate themselves from

their homes. Chhaupadi involve the forbidding of women to touch other people, enter a temple, touch religious idols or go to school. It is clearly seen that deeply biased and anti-feminist practice which resolves around the belief that women are inherently inferior to men. Even after the ban, activists and campaigners found anecdotal evidence that despite the disassemble of menstruation huts in host communities, many women still engage in the practice due to stigma, generational traditions, and social pressure. It is impossible to place charges against social stigma and tradition, making implementation of the law difficult. In rural places of Nepal, many residents openly oppose lawmakers who attempt to apply the law. Whereas criminalization of the practice is a start though there are so many hurdles. The article indicates as largest hurdle to overcome is changing the mindset not only of those people who impose the practice on women, but of the women themselves who have been habituated to believe that menstruation creates 'impurity' within them. They must be enlightened from the inside vision. Activist Amar Sunar opined that after the law passed on into effect, 'laws don't change attitudes', and hardest part of this issue is changing the attitudes of young women and their families, and ensuring the resources in place for women who take a stand for themselves and others. Therefore, women must be better educated about reproductive health, social stigma, and the dangers of chhaupadi in order to keep themselves safe and help for the future generations of women to flourish without worrying about social stigma surrounding their menstruation cycle (Manu, February, 2019).

4.2. Impacts of Menstruation Stigma

According to (Thebe Limbu, 2017), just the cultural beliefs and practices are not responsible for menstrual stigma. There are other various factors such as caste; ethnicity, religion and geographical region also influence the nature and degree of stigmatization. The impacts of menstrual stigma multiplied with poor menstrual hygiene. They hinder equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in various educational, social, cultural and economic activities and continue the cycle of gender inequality and social exclusion. She mentions, menstruation affects for school achievement with 30% of girls missing schools during periods in Nepal. Most often they miss school due to physical pain, limited infrastructure such as lack of separate/private toilets, doors locks, running water, sanitary pads disposal facilities. Another additional cause of missing school is mental stress: a feeling of embarrassment from possible leakage, and social

norm. Due to the poor menstrual sanitation and cleanliness results in reproductive health problems like urinary tract infection, vaginal scabies and abnormal discharge. Similarly, other psychological problems arise from internalized feelings of shame, untouchable and low self-esteem. Therefore, there are multiple impacts of menstruation stigma; they are needed to be addressed creating a safe and supporting environment for women and girls. It is important to manage their menstruation hygienically, and with dignity. Through the article Thebe, argues that the menstruation stigma impacts on multiple dimensions in ladies life (physical, mental or psychological). If we relate this stigma with the tradition of chhaupadi, multiplies the stigmas because in chhaupadi tradition they are banished from going school and other several activities just simply because of menstruation. The perception of society towards menstruation is as sin, impurity and untouchable.

All these literatures deal with the meaning, and definition about chhaupadi. They also discuss about restrictions, abandons, and conditions of segregation during menstruation in this tradition. How the stigma surrounds and pushes them towards low self-esteem condition in life. They also claim that it is against of human rights of women in the name of tradition. It's so obvious; sufferings of chaupadi-practicing ladies have immeasurable. This research explains blind faith is the base of chhaupadi along with illiteracy and how it alienates ladies and stigmatized them. In this research menstruation stigma is used. With the help of these literatures researcher analyzed the chhaupadi system through the perception of stigma in micro level. In this way researcher has completed the study using the qualitative research method to collect information from inner side of literatures.

Chapter Five

Findings and Critical Analysis

5.0. Chapter Introduction

This chapter deals with the findings from secondary documents in this research. I have included 10 stories and some reports from different organizations in this chapter. These are the 10 different stories of those people who have been practicing in the chhaupadi tradition. I would like to analyze those stories in order to contextualize the theme of this research. The 9 stories (3 from Sarjana KC and 6 from Khadka) out 10 have been already collected by previous researchers and one is published in journal written by a girl Kabita Nepali herself thus there is no question of the confidentiality in terms of ethical aspect. I would say these stories seem to be very crucial documents for this research because victims/followers of this practice themselves has shared their stories. These stories help to understand that due to this weird practice how ladies are suffering, facing menstruation stigma, social exclusion during menstruation, sense of alienation, sense of dehumanization, and sense of vulnerability. These 10 selected stories have been portrayed in my own words rather than present same as same previous researchers have presented, though the core value and meaning of the stories are remaining the same.

5.1. Stories of Chhaupadi-Practicing Ladies

At the beginning, I have used first three different cases, are already collected by Sarjana (KC, 2018), for the purpose of completion her master thesis in academic level “Master in International Social Welfare and Health Policy” under the title of ‘Impacts on social well-being of women due to the chhaupadi tradition (being untouchable during menstruation) among the women of far western Nepal’, available in ODA HIOA Archive. The case has been collected as primary source that means she has been reached to the place called Achham which is one of the districts of far-west Nepal and gathered these stories in 2018. Assembling through personal interview design and purposeful maximal sampling method, make it an idea source for giving the actual experiences and explanation about chhaupadi practice of young, adult and women with new born

baby. And the latter, I have used from last, six stories collected by Nirajan (Khadka, 2014) for the requirement of his master thesis submitted to ‘Central Department of Sociology/Anthropology, Kirtipur, Nepal’ in 2014 under the title of “Chhaupadi Pratha: Women’s Condition and Suffering” which is available as portable document format file in Google. He has collected these cases/stories as primary resources through field visit, personal interview, observation, and group interviews etc.

5.1.1. Presentation of Sources in the Table

Previous collector	Collected date	Available	No. of stories	Purpose
1) Sarjana KC	2018	HIOA Archive	3 (A-C)	Thesis submission
2) Deepa Nepali (self-story writer)	Published, 2017	Blink Now	1 (D)	Blog
3) Nirajan Khadka	2013	PDF in Google scholar	6 (E-J)	Thesis submission

Story A

Experiential story of teenager girl, 18 years old who is 10th class student from local school. She lives with her very traditional family therefore they don’t talk about menstruation among family especially male members. She has lost her mother few years back so she feels very bad for not getting chances to share her feelings and difficulties with her mother. Her mother used to tell her when she gets matured will get menstruation then she will be ready for marry and have a baby. As time being she also gets menstruation and learns to use a piece of cloth during menstruation bleeding and sanitary pads. As other people she also gets sent to the chhaupadi hut by her family. She feels lonely and irritated when she stays in the chhaupadi hut but she cuddles the tradition because she thinks it is her duty to follow the rituals as a girl. She understands menstruation is periodic, natural and regular bleeding from women’s body. It is not sin and impurity at all but she grows up in the society where all people practice chhaupadi so she is psychologically

influenced by it. Therefore, her own psychology doesn't let her to ignore it and she stays in the hut during her periods. At her first menstruation she stays 7 days then later 5 days in every month. She says, obviously it's not easy to stay there 5 to 7 days; she doesn't allowed to use bed, blanket, and any other warm clothing. It's just allowed to use mat made up of grass which is too hard so it's difficult to spent night due to cold. Like many others she also doesn't sleep well whole night due to cold, fear of animal attack, snakebite, sometimes rape case and molestations by males as chhaupadi hut lies far from home. In her menstruation hut, there is not window and door, it's just narrow opening from where she comes and goes. She works hard all day long and stays inside hut at night alone, she can't touch even animal, can't enter into the house and can't go to school as well. She isn't allowed to eat healthy food and fruits, milk and other dairy products, meat, cereals and vegetables. She just has to eat plain rice with salt or bread with salt. In her village there are few shared chhaupadi huts and some girl stays in personal hut. It is safer those who share hut to stay in group than staying alone.

There is not any toilet in that hut. They must go out at night if they need to pass urine or stools. It seems fearful due to animal attack like tiger, snake and molestation by bad peoples. She uses her own hut but some other women who doesn't have hut they use cowsheds as hut along with the animal which is not clean. Therefore, due to poor hygiene condition inside hut many people get sick. She also gets pneumonia because of cold and unhygienic condition once before. She remembers, one night at the time of staying at hut alone she gets sudden severe pain in her stomach then frightens, cries rolling down her tears; miss her mother and shouts loud. Therefore she says, it's not only physically difficult but also psychologically stressful. She feels isolated and socially excluded because she can't touch anyone and even to the animals. Nobody touches her utensils she uses for eating food, nobody shares tap where she go to collect water. Nobody touches the things which she touches. People clean themselves with gold and water if mistakenly they are touched by her. Along with physical weakness, she has to face mental tension. People in her village use to arouse the fear saying that if women reject to stay in hut during menstruation bleeding, souls of ancestors and God gets angry and punish whole village and villagers. She doesn't think it's true but can't deny the tradition too because if she steps out from the practices she will be excluded from the society and if any bad fortune happen in the society/village she will be blamed for that. She thinks, due to the fear of blamed of bad incident, cursed by ancestor

and God along with the social exclusion all women themselves including her do not wish to take any action in this tradition and follow it without any objection (KC, 2018, pp. 36-38).

Reflection on the Story A and Critical Analysis

In this above story, she knows general things about menstruation which is not sin but still can't go against this practice because of the fear of blamed of bad fortune in her family and village. This is a kind of superstition that makes to compel her to follow the tradition. She also has fear of being excluded forever by society if not follow the tradition. This means that she is grown up in the society where there was a tradition of chhaupadi strictly followed so she has a big picture in her mind about this practice that push her still in confusion of occurring bad fortune due to Gods' anger if not following this ritual. She has life threatening problem from animal attack, snakebites and rape cases as well. She has shared her pain and sickness staying in hut which is really vulnerable in itself. In case of these various difficulties, still she follows the tradition. In the name of tradition no doubt it is extreme discrimination for women and girls. Everybody can be felt that how she has been stigmatized from the family/society simply for being menstruation which is considered as sin and impurity that is truly inhuman. She has a feeling of isolation, alienation because she has excluded from her own family and society just because of menstruation which taints her femininity. As Bell Hook said, women are oppressed due to their silence and resignation for provoking the questions (Hooks, 2000). In this above case too she knows menstruation is not sin but still she doesn't dare to protest due to the piles of her confusions and fear. Actually, menstruation is not a matter of sin but the matter of cleanness. It is crucial thing to stay hygienic during menstruation, and in this condition girls have the rights of access about sanitary because it's a matter of human rights which define menstrual hygiene as follows:

“The human rights framework and the links between menstrual hygiene and these varied human rights highlight the need for a holistic understanding of menstrual hygiene. It is not just an infrastructure issue; it is at least as much an issue of having the voice and space to articulate and meet one's needs. It requires access to accurate and pragmatic

information and raising the awareness and confidence of women and girls to manage menstruation with safety, privacy, and dignity” (Winkler & Roaf, 2015, p. 29).

Through this definition human rights demand to manage the menstruation with human dignity rather to consider as a form of sin and impurity. Every women and girls have rights to have access in information and raising awareness about reproductive health because human rights consider it is an issue of voice and meet one’s need.

Story B, Story of Adult Women

This is the story of 29 years old women. She has an education up to 11th grade then she gets marry. She can’t continue her higher education more than this due to the poor economic condition of her family. She gets marry in her parents’ choice and agreement. She has a general knowledge about the menstruation which is natural course in the female body due to the hormone production for reproductive health as she learns in school.

She gets her first menstruation at the age of 12 and now she is 29. It’s completely 17 years old experiences about chhaupadi tradition practice. When she gets her first menstruation goes to chhaupadi shed for 21 days where she lives all alone, far away from all family members, friends, and relatives or far away from the society. She doesn’t get permission to come out and directly look the sun, see male members and touch anybody. She feels lonely. She misses all friends, family members and school as well. She spends all the time sleeping on hard mat made by bamboo grass and crying all alone. She wonders when she comes back to the home. And now, she stays 5 days every month. She says it is not easy and not sweet or beautiful experience on this practice. She uses pieces of clothes for sanitary pads that make allergic reaction in her genitals.

The elder people in her village use to say that God becomes angry and bad luck comes to the village and affects the whole villagers if women don’t follow the chhaupadi tradition during menstruation. So, there is a complex reason for her that why she is still following the chhaupadi because all women in her village follow it and those who don’t follow will be considered as the reason of bad things happen in village. People use to say if any woman doesn’t follow chhaupadi

tradition there will be no any growth of crops in fields because doing plantation, harvest and get food from the field is only way for living and if there is no crops in the field it can be a great problem. Therefore every woman follows it as their duty of being female. Her mother in law also wants to send her to chhaupadi hut during her period then she doesn't want to deny her because every girl has been taught to obey her husband and her mother-in-law. Her husband is in abroad to earn money to run the house and she doesn't want to give any tension to her husband by denying the practice in this age. Actually, it's not easy to break the years and year's old tradition in her opinion. She says this tradition is normalized, accepted and passed from older generation to new generation as common culture. However, she feels very difficult to stay in hut for 5 days because as other woman she is also not allowed to use any bed, bed sheet or blanket. It becomes very cold during winter, some women get fire inside hut to be warm but she scares to fire inside the hut because some women have died due to suffocation caused by smoke from fire inside the hut. The structure of hut is too congested; there is no doors and windows just a one side opening for entrance and exit. She is not only experienced physical problems but also the psychological tensions. She feels ignored, isolated and excluded from her family, friends and society. She misses her children whom she can't meet and touch which is really heart wrenching moment. The things make her extremely irritated when she can't have the access to tap water and common toilet. She really feels vulnerable physically and mentally due to the lack of nutritious food and proper hygiene. She falls sick many times. It's very difficult to bear sickness because nobody wants to take her to the health care center nearby the village because she is having menstruation and as not supposed to touch or socialize with people. She says, few years ago her elder sister's daughter who was 15 years old used to say she feels difficult to breath inside the hut during menstruation but nobody took it seriously. One day during her period she found dead inside menstruation hut. Somebody said, she died due to the suffocation, lack of oxygen inside hut. Somebody said, pneumonia is reason for her death and somebody said, she might have touch to other people so got punished by God. When this incident comes in her mind breaks her heart apart. She also has 9 years old daughter, has not get menstruation yet but she is anxious about her. She knows she can't convince her family and also she doesn't want to send her to hut and suffer. So this tradition is giving her torture (ibid 39-41).

Reflection on the Story of this Adult Women and Critical Analysis

The story of this adult woman is tremendously unpleasant; she has terrible experiences in her first menstruation living in hut, she couldn't wait for coming back to home. This means she has a feeling of alienation, social exclusion. And now, she really missed her family and children when she goes to stay in menstruation hut. No doubt, this is very painful situation for her physically and mentally. Here, we can easily understand how she is suffered from menstruation stigma, isolation, and annoyance. Still she follows the tradition because she has fear of social exclusion, blame of misfortune in village and family, and tension from society. Moreover, she has a fear of breaking the relationship with her mother-in-law and husband because her mother-in-law wishes to make her follow the tradition. Simon De Beauvoir said, When women consent to their own oppression and help to oppress other women, they are to be blamed (Moi, 2010) exactly the same way in this case, it seems that women themselves are the key reason for passing the chhaupadi practice from generation to generation as an active performer. Either a mother or a mother-in-law is the person who teaches and directs to their daughter and daughter-in-law to follow the tradition. Thus, when women themselves accept menstruation as impure and sin then they identify themselves as the 'other' and the second person as incomplete human according to Simon de Beauvoir. This is the reason where women put men as the absolute and pure, and women are accepting themselves as 'other' (ibid), they push themselves into conflict between being human and being women. They accept themselves 'other' by following the tradition created by male without any interrogation. They bear injustice due to the weakness, fear and confusion. Until they don't become empower and strong they remain oppressing by male and female too. If they don't have objection, it can be impossible to get justice. And Imogen Coe speaks that combat for gender equality is not just a matter of justice and rights but also the responsibility of everyone- men, women, leaders, researchers and one and all (Coe, 2019). Exactly, It can be reflected on this concern is not just about the matter of female, chhaupadi and it's all about the issue of society.

Story of a Woman with New Born Baby (Story C)

The story of 28 years old women with six days old baby boy who is living in chhaupadi hut. She lives 11 days in chhaupadi hut during her first child birth until naming ceremony. She doesn't get good and warm clothes and uses just old and useless clothes and blanket when she gives her first child birth because they can't bring them back to the house again to reuse that has already been used in chhaupadi hut. And this time she gets permission for better, newer and warm clothes but still she needs to stay 11 days in hut as before. She is allowed to come outside but can't touch and use the common tap in village. She needs to take care of baby by herself. She has to wrap up with new clothes to the baby and place the baby in ground from where other person can take baby without touching her when she needs to go toilet, if not she needs to wait until baby sleep. It seems quite weird but it is normalized and practiced in her village, she says.

She finds quite difficult to maintain sanitation inside hut because there is no access of diapers for baby in her village. She uses small clothes as underwear for baby to pass the urine and poo. She changes these clothes very often but can't wash them immediately because she can't use common tap water. It is not possible to get help to clean these clothes and inside outside hut by her family members because they are not allowed to come inside hut and touch everything there. So, she must clean inside hut; keep baby clean and herself as well. She must maintain cleanliness herself that makes her tired and exhausted all the time. Moreover, she can't get good and healthiest food while staying in chhaupadi hut. She must eat only jwano (special types of spice) soup and rice. There is a cultural belief that women should not eat fish, meat and other dairy products until they become pure after 11th days of naming ceremony of new born. When her family members bring food, they place it in front of the hut and she pulls it inside without touching each other. She should wash the vessels used eating and let them dry under the sun because nobody touches these vessels either. She feels dominated and neglected in this very poor situation. She says, people in her village are very conservative and believe in evil spirits, witchcraft therefore they take baby to shaman very often. She feels so tortured, stressed mentally and tired physically. She doesn't understand why a mother should suffer in this way. She doesn't have freedom about her own life and own child being a human. She says, it must be changed so future generations should not be suffered like her generation in this way (ibid 41-42).

Reflection on the Story and Critical Analysis

In my reflection, this is an example of stigma in the name of tradition. She is totally untouchable and baby can be taken by others but she needs to place baby on the ground without touching others, which is really weird. Unfortunately, there are many women and girls, who are still stigmatizing in this area being simply female or menstruation. In the lack of education and knowledge, people dehumanize women during menstruation and post-delivery period or giving a new birth of baby. During this time for both new born and mother need care and support along with nutritious diet but this tradition usage very opposite which is very unsafe to the life of infant and mother. Newly born baby and mother should stay in hut until the naming ceremony in 11 days. This means 11 days they (baby & mom) are restricted from going home and touching others. It is necessary to alter the mindset of the people in the society to eradicate such inhuman practice. She asks herself, “why mother always should be suffered and why she doesn’t have freedom upon her own life and her baby” because she is anxious about her child’s health. Due to not enough warm clothes and proper diet baby suffers from cold, pneumonia and others diseases. Her feelings of anger clearly show that how she is anxious, irritated and stigmatized with the tradition and patriarchy. It shows her pitiable condition of awareness too because freedom doesn’t come itself without fighting for it and questioning upon discrimination. Therefore, they need to be empowered to combat against this injustice and cruel practice. They should be educated in reproductive health issues, menstruation hygiene and human rights that enhance their living standard.

Story of Deepa Nepali/ Story D

This is the story of Deepa Nepali of Kopila Valley School, published in journal “Blink Now”. This is the story based on own her experiences of chhaupadi practice. According to her, she has her first menstruation period at the age of 12 years old, the month of November which is very cold season in Nepal. As others who practice this tradition in the same way, she also banishes from staying at home and goes to stay in her neighbors’ because there is not a chhau goth (menstruation hut) in her house. She sleeps in their hut on the floor on a straw mat and her jacket as a pillow. She is not allowed to go to her house for 13 days. She is not even allowed to look in the direction of her house, or even talk to her family members, mainly the males. She loves to eat papaya but she is clearly being told that she is not permitted to eat the papaya because it is

considered as a holy fruit and if she touches it, the entire tree will rot. She can't drink cows' milk for this reason as well, because the cow symbolizes Goddess Laxmi mata (Goddess of wealth). Based on her understanding, it is believed that if they drink milk during menstruation then the cow will stop giving milk because of the curse. It's the same for oil which is also considered holy. They can't physically touch anyone. After those first 13 days, she gets bathe, receives new clothes, and drinks some drops of cows' urine to purify her. After these activities she is allowed to enter the home. Then, from the next menstruation she stays in hut for 5 days every month, during this time she is not allowed to touch anything as her first period.

She states, being a student of Kopila Valley School, she has learned about the reason for menstruation in biology and health classes at school. She understands the consequences and the fact that this is a natural existence in the human body. Most of them even understand that it's not sinful or a curse. However they don't want to go in against of this practice and blamed for the misfortune or bad things that happen to their family and village, so still they feel like they need to follow the practice and most women in her village are practicing it (Blink Now, 2017).

Replication upon the Story of Deepa Nepali

She is another example of stigmatized girl due to this tradition; at the age of 12 she was restricted from touching and entering the house because of her first menstruation period. Until 13 days she remained in her neighbors' hut, slept in straw mat using her jacket as pillow just simply because of her menstruation. Menstruation is a complex source of stigmatization, and chhaupadi tradition makes more visible and more stigmatizing. It is the matter of shame to talk in family and society. In case of Deepa, she knows it is not sin and impurity as society says but due to the fear of blamed of mistune in family and village she follows it as other women do. It is deep rooted culture from years and years, so unknowingly female they have a kind of invisible belief that God will punish and bad luck occurs if they refused the custom. They don't have clear idea if God really angry or not but they are habituated to believe in this.

Story of Tulsa Luhar (Story E)

This is the story spoken by Tulsa Luhar (name changed), according to her they/women should face various kinds of difficulties and happened bad things in their life due to not following the system. They believe it is really sinful not following the tradition. According to her she has seen a woman who was not following the system in the village, avoiding the rules, she lived inside the home, drunk dairy products, went anywhere through the way of temple during menstruation period. Then after some days her son had gone to the jungle to gather fire wood, unfortunately tiger attacked her son and killed him. It was considered cause of sin for not following the chhaupadi tradition in the society. All the people in this village believe this blindly (Khadka, 2014).

Reinterpretation of Tulsa's Story by Researcher

From this story, it could be easily understood that how people believe the things related to menstruation and chhaupadi tradition. They have blind faith upon the superstitious culture and speeches. Tulsa believes what she society believes and she has shared her experience as she is eyewitness of her neighbors' son died due to the not following of tradition by her mother. So, violating the chhaupadi rules most women and girls do not want to be the participant of sin and other family members also don't want to take the risk. The concept of religion and sin plays the role to operate the chhaupadi practice in the region because they believe due to sin of not following the tradition God angered and cursed so died her son. It should be change the mentality of the society where chhaupadi is flourished.

Story of Dipa Saud (Story F)

It is an incident shared by local woman Dipa Saud (name changed); a big stone lies in front of her house in which The God lives, people believe it. They use to worship the stone as a God. It is not allowed to touch and go near for chhaupadi women. One day, she brings the grass for cattle in the way. The grasses are wet due to the rain and she keeps this grass side of the big stone. The grass touches the stone in which people believe the God lives. Then the God gets angry, and then a big snake appears in front of the house cause of God anger. After that her mother in law comes

and tells to snake, “Please! God forgive us, it is our big fault, and we will never do such acts again!” then the snake goes away slowly far from the house and disappears (ibid p. 48).

Dipa’s Incidental Story’s Reflection

This is an example of blind faith upon the tradition. The snake comes and goes; it is not the matter of religion and sin, neither the reason of god’s anger nor happiness. This is just a coincidence but miserable people are compelled to believe this as an action of God. It is not difficult to understand that they need education, awareness and more than that empowerment. Educational, social and economic empowerment is essential to eradicate this practice because if those women are economically and educationally powerful they know the horizon of their life, they understand their rights and duty in social periphery.

Story of Tulasa Saud (Story G)

This is a story of Tulasa Saud, who is one of the community mobilizer in Achham district, Nepal. When she understands many negative effects of chhaupadi pratha (being untouchable tradition) through the different awareness programs then she gives up that evil practices and stays at home during her menstruation. Unfortunately, during this time, her goats are killed by the attack of wild animal. All of her family members believe that due to the rejection to adhere of tradition, all of these happened. She is blamed the cause of bad things upon her family making God anger, not following the tradition. This incident reinforces her to believe in such practices and she feels that the God and Goddess are not happy with her. After that she continues the practice again, in the face of some reluctance. After some time, she becomes a community mobilizer for a local NGO, working on empowering members of the community. She gets many chances to learn about women’s and child’s issues. These kinds of teaching and learning activities, not only makes her empowered but also she becomes success to empower others and her family members as well. And good thing is here; she and her whole family don’t believe in such practices and don’t follow the tradition now (ibid pg53).

Reflection on Tulasa Saud's Story

This story reflects the clear picture that how difficult for women to go against this tradition, being a social mobilizer she faced many difficulties, blamed of hardship by family and society. Though she dared to participate in different programs and activities by NGO and learned many things about women and child's issues then finally, she became success to convince her family. This means it is not impossible but of course it is not easy too. With the time flow, this tradition will be completely washed-out in near future.

Story of a Mother (Story H)

This is the story of a mother from Duni village at Achham district, Nepal. She has been practicing this tradition since her first menstruation. Even in her post-partum period too she gives her continuation for the practice, following the birth of her child. As other people she also has many problematic experiences since she begins the practice but agrees with her traditional and cultural practices. She believes that if she refuses to follow the tradition her family will blame her for all harm that may come to the family and society. Because of this practice, she has lost her baby. However, no one in her family have negative attitude towards such practices and so they are keeping continue the tradition yet (ibid P. 53-54).

Reflection on the Story of a Mother

This is really a harsh story; this is unkind practice in the name of tradition. Due to the lack of education and knowledge she has lost her baby and still doesn't have courage to go against of it because of vulnerability, unawareness about right and duties. Not only has she had fear of God but also her family members of the house, they can't speak up and go in against of this practice.

Story of Rambha Auji (Story I)

Story of Rambha Auji from Duni village at Achham district, Nepal. She has a bitter experience of this practice. Every month during menstruation, she has to stay in her family's cattle shed, that is called as the menstruation hut. She arouses a question to herself why God has given this kind of agony to the women. Staying in the shed is so terrible, smelling that is quite clear to all because its functions as cattle shed. She is obligated to be taking her meals in this unclean place and environment. During menstruation, she is considered to be impure or unclean during these periods and is regarded as an untouchable by her family members. She has really bitter feelings about this, rooted in these practices. Once she goes to clean herself and her clothes in a nearby stream but villagers and family members accuse her of making the whole stream impure. After several weeks, the problem gets fixed, but not until she had guaranteed her corresponding villagers that she would not repeating her actions in the future. Elderly people and others in the community hesitate to use the stream water for a long time due to this reason. She doesn't have hope that her situation will change after marriage and says that her own family doesn't consider or support her during that period, even though she is their daughters and sisters. Why the in-laws give support them, when the daughters-in-law are considered secondary? She believes that this practice is a result of traditional beliefs, taboos and practices (ibid P. 40).

Rambha Auji's Story Based Reflection

In my own understanding, this story is the example of social exclusion and stigma in a sense that when she uses nearby stream, villagers accuse her of making the whole stream impure. Elderly people and others in community hesitate to use the stream water for long time, and some week's later problem was fixed when she assigned not to use this stream again during menstruation. She is not only restricted to touch other people but also the public tap, toilet and stream too. This kind of asocial practices cause because of knowledge and education. Most of the people from society seem to belong to uneducated background. Due to this very bitter experience she seems pessimistic in future from the eradication of this practice because still she is unmarried and her 'parents can't support her then why and how in-laws will support to stop it' she wonders. She is stigmatized by her own family during menstruation.

Story of Mrs. Dhanakala Kami (Story J)

Mrs. Dhankala kami also has to stay in her family's cattle shed and menstrual hut during her monthly period. Members of her family and the people of the community consider the time of a women's period as very impure so the women have to remain isolated in detached area and cattle sheds are used for this purpose. Because the village is stricken with poverty, the community cannot construct another shelter for use as a menstrual shed. The community believes that if anything is touched by menstruating women, it will become impure and may cause harm to others. If they touch something accidentally, then the item should be cleaned immediately to make it reusable. If the women touch their husband or other members, then those touched must bathe in order to cleanse themselves of impurities. During these periods, she feels as if she was like an animal, not human anymore. Even during the winter season her family's belief wouldn't change, their heart wouldn't melt (ibid p. 40-41).

Dhanakala's Story Based Reflection

According to my own understanding on the basis of her story, her expression of suffering and inner anger shows the irritation and stigmatized state of mind. She thinks herself as animal during menstruation because she has to live in cattle in this period. The menstruation hut also depends upon the financial condition, so poor people can't make hut and just use the cattle shed and stay with animal. How difficult it is we just can't imagine in this 21st century. This is the big satire for science and modernism.

5.2. The Report Presentation on Chhaupadi Case

Report shows, the most chhaupadi tradition is observed in Accham district, may be the reason the word chhaupadi comes from Accham local Raute dialect. According to UN Report in 2011, within the district of Achham, 95% of women were practicing chhaupadi (United Nations, Field Bulletin: Chaupadi in the far-west. United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator's Office. Kathmandu, Nepal, 2011). Now, there is awareness programs are running aiming to educate teenagers and advocate for women's rights along with the government's signature

campaigns for demolishing the tradition. According to present DIG Tarini Lamsal, chief of Far-west Province Police Officer (FwPPO), 2096 chhau sheds were destroyed just from Achham district out of 2551 destroying sheds (Deuba, January, 2020). These two different reports indicate the Achham is in front line area where chhaupadi is in practice so the destruction number of hut also high in number there.

It was shared from community people that Restless Development Nepal had worked in Dadeldhura, Kailali and Kanchanpur districts to abolish the chhaupadi system. An end-line survey report of this institution done in those places has showed that the worst forms of chhaupadi practices was successfully reduced to 5.5% at the end of the project in 2017 whereas the prevalence was 19.4% in base-line date of 2015. It was reported that the change in behavior was seen across all age from 15-49 years old (Restless Development Nepal, 2018). As a more recent update, Nepal Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (NJMR) has reported that the majority of the girls 77% of the participants practiced chhaupadi (Khadka & Karki, March, 2019). Prior to this, a 2010 government survey found that around 20% of women in the country practice chhaupadi, and this number enlarged to 50% in more rural areas in mid-and far-western regions (Manu, February, 2019). This means slowly and gradually the tradition is losing its strictness due to the different awareness programs and campaigns organized by different organizations like NGOs, INGOs, and Nepal government. So, there is hope for the eradication of this practice successfully.

Chapter Six

Discussion

6.0. Chapter Introduction

The main purpose of this research writing is to find the way of menstruation stigma facing by rural women in relation to chhaupadi tradition in far-west Nepal. To answer the research question 10 stories were taken. So, this chapter will discuss the result in reference to stories. To show the social stigma, stigma theory will be taken from chapter two. Then, feminism theory will help to judge and fight against tradition. And to overcome or cope with stigma empowerment and justice theory will be occupied. Finally, some reasons behind the continuation of this traditional practice will be included.

6.1. Menstruation Stigma in Relation to Chhaupadi Tradition

In the all stories of chapter 5, most ladies know general things about menstruation which is not sin but still can't go against this practice because of the fear of blamed of bad fortune in their family and village. This is a kind of superstition that makes to compel the ladies to follow the tradition. They also have the fear of being excluded by society in case of not follow the tradition. This means that they are grown up in the society where there was a tradition of chhaupadi strictly followed so they have a big picture inside the mind about this practice and its consequences that push them still in confusion of occurring bad fortune due to Gods' anger if not following this ritual. They have life threatening problem from animal attack, snakebites and rape cases as well. Some of them ladies have shared their pain and sickness staying in hut; especially in story A and B. In case of these various difficulties, still they follow the tradition. In general understanding, in the name of tradition it is extreme discrimination for women and girls on the base of gender inequity. It must be wiped out.

According to Goffman, stigma is “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” (Goffman, 1963, p. 3) and “based on definition we believe, the person with stigma is not quite human” (ibid pg.5). He opines Stigma as a special kind of relationship between an “attribute and a stereotype” constructed by the society. He has categorized the stigma into three types: “abominations of the

body” (e.g., burns, scars, deformities), “blemishes of individual character” (e.g., criminality, addictions), and “tribal” identities or social markers associated with marginalized groups (e.g., gender, race, sexual orientation, nationality) (ibid pg.4). Here, menstruation blood considered as abominations. It is believed that unclean and impure during menstruation period so they are sent to chhaupadi goth (hut). It may be viewed as blemish on one’s character while menstruation is considered as sin. And menstruation blood taints women’s femininity. Therefore, chhaupadi as a stigma fits all the three categories of Goffman. Menstruation is considered as a mark to describe a divergent condition that might define the menstrual women as flawed or spoiled. Therefore stigma concerns a stereotypical view of certain groups of people (Bruke, 2006, p. 11). Women are highly stigmatized in the name of tradition like chhaupadi because they are secluded during menstruation with various restrictions. How the boundaries are culturally imposed upon them and how they are suffering and facing stigma regarding this, they have shared their feelings and experiences in their stories:-

Feelings and Experiences Shared in Above Story	Interpretation and Theoretical Reflection
<p>1) She feels isolated and socially excluded because she can’t touch anyone and even to the animals, nobody touches her utensils that she used, nobody touches things what she has touched, and people clean themselves with gold and water if mistakenly she touched them. (Story A)</p>	<p>➤ A stigmatized identity is one that is considered as a mark of failure/sin or shame, contaminating the self (Goffman, 1963). Her statements show how she is facing the stigma due to her menstruation living in chhaupadi hut. It seems like the women committed a crime named of menstruation and undertaking the punishment inside chhau hut. She has the feeling of exclusion, humiliation, alienation and isolation. With the feeling of disrespect how she can handle her life successfully? How the stigmatized people are ruining their beautiful life? We just can imagine through her story. It also help to understand that how</p>

	<p>young girls grow up feeling this sense of deprivation when they are isolated from their family and friends, get frightened to touch anything in case they make it unclean.</p>
<p>2) She was sent to chhaupadi hut in first menstruation for 21 days at the age of 12, she lived all alone. She was not allowed to look directly to sun, see male members and touch anybody. And now, she lives in chhaupadi hut 5 days every month with full restrictions. (Story B)</p>	<p>➤ It is simply because of her biological process of menstruation, she is secluded from family and society in chhapadi hut every month. They have to face menstruation stigma from menarche to menopause. This means big part of life is passing by tolerating the social stigma in chhau goth (Menstruation hut).</p>
<p>3) She can't use good, new, and warm clothes and blankets as well because they can't bring them back again for reuse that already has been used in chhaupadi hut. She has to stay in chhaupadi hut until naming ceremony in 11 days with the all restrictions as menstrual bleeding. (Story C)</p>	<p>➤ In this tradition, postpartum period of new mother with her new born have to stay in hut until the naming ceremony, who is also considered as impure and untouchable like menstrual women and banished from touching to others, enter to house, use to common tap and toilet, eating dairy products and green vegetables along with meat and others. Her statement helps to understand, they don't have the right of life because it's a tough threatening matter for their life for new mother and baby.</p> <p>UN report declares that 89% of women in Nepal deliver their children at home, while proportion of these women that in fact deliver in chhaupadi goth is not known, it is thought to be high in the far west. These conditions are thought to higher maternal and child</p>

	<p>mortality rate (United Nations, Field Bulletin: Chaupadi in the far-west. United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator's Office. Kathmandu, Nepal, 2011). We know, good take care and nutritious food needed in this period for mothers but they have to spend time inside hut being excluded from society. It is risky enough.</p>
<p>4) She is not allowed to drink cow's milk because cow symbolizes Goddess of wealth, if she drinks milk, cow will stop to give milk, if she eats or touches papaya, and the whole tree will rot due to the anger and curse of God. (Story D)</p>	<p>➤ Chhaupadi culture is based on Hindu religion; in which cow is assumed as Goddess and symbol of purity so it is not allowed to touch and drink milk by chhau women. Moreover, achhau women cannot eat and touch fruits which are the example of high degree of stigmatization in the name of tradition.</p>
<p>5) A woman denying the custom didn't go to chhaupdi hut, eat dairy products, went to the way of temple during menstruation but after some days her son was killed by tiger's attack in the jungle, it was considered due to God's anger of not following the tradition'. (Story E)</p>	<p>➤ This situation indicates her illiteracy and blind faith. In the eyes of many rural areas of western Nepal, ignoring chhaupadi tradition would bring ruin to everyone.</p> <p>➤ Stigma is typically a social process, experienced or expected, characterized by exclusion, rejection, blame or devaluation about person (Weiss, Ramakrishna, & Somma, 2006). Through this tradition chhau women are characterized by exclusion, devaluation, rejection and blamed of misfortune if the bad luck occurred in village or anyone. Here in her statement her son was killed by tiger for denying chhau rules and god's anger.</p>

<p>6) One day, mistakenly her wet grass touched the stone which they believe God lives, immediately a snake came and my mother-in-law did pray for God to forgive then snake disappeared. (Story F)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ These are the examples of blind devotion upon the culture; I can reflect them just as a coincident. It doesn't have any relation of menstruation with the movement of snake. All in all are superstitious beliefs.
<p>7) During menstruation, she has to go to chhaupadi hut for isolation considering impure. She is measured as untouchable and restricted to eat dairy products, fruits, and healthy diets, along with good, warm clothes and blankets during this time. If she doesn't follow the ritual it is believed that God will angry and curse that causes bad fortune to her family and village. (Story I)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ She has the fear of God's anger if she doesn't go to chhau goth (hut). ➤ She believes if god really got angry and cursed her then she will be the cause of occurring misfortune either in her family of in village. ➤ This expression clearly shows her lack of education and knowledge about the menstruation process and menstruation hygiene. So, due to lack of knowledge many women are facing the stigma.
<p>8) She can't make disappointed to her mother-in-law denying the chhaupadi tradition, and not want to give tension for husband who is earning bread for family in abroad. (Story B)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Simon de Beauvoir said, women consent to their own oppression and help to oppress other women (Beauvoir, 2010). I think, exactly the same way, in this case woman strict on woman which is very sad thing. Woman is the person who plays active role for continuation of this practice either as a mother or a mother-in-law who counsels a daughter and daughter-in-law on this way. ➤ Another reason is the male domination

	<p>society, so she can't go against her husband and husbands' mother. The report shows that the social status of most women in the communities still low and in many cases under the male members' dominance or the domination of husbands' family members (Restless Development Nepal, 2018).</p>
<p>9) She can't go to pass urine at night because of the fear of animal attack like tiger, snakebite and molestation by bad peoples. (Story B)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Here, we can understand how difficult to abandon the old beliefs or die hard, even when death, rape and immature pregnancy are the terrible consequence. ➤ UN report mentions that drunkards sometimes go to chhaupadi sheds and sexually abuse the women staying in them. Such incidents are rarely reported due to stigma (United Nations, Field Bulletin: Chaupadi in the far-west. United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator's Office. Kathmandu, Nepal, 2011). This story tells the truth presented by UN in Field Bulletin.
<p>10) She can't go to school during menstruation because she is not allowed. (Story A)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ From her statement we can suppose why the social status of women is low in Nepal. When daughters grow up to be ashamed of their own nature of ordinary body. Due to the girls participating chhaupadi stops attending school every month during this period of personal isolation. We can perceive the reason of sustaining inequality in education and stigma surrounding periods from this (Robinson, 2015).

All these are the examples of their experiences, feelings and expressions of stigmatized situation. Most ladies in chhaupadi practiced area are struggling with the same condition which is extremely miserable. UN Report declared the feeling of insecurity; guilt and humiliation as well as sadness and depression also are experienced by women who practice chhaupadi (United Nations, 2011). Staying in a chhaupadi hut is extremely risky; many women have lost their lives while observing the system. In last December, 2019, Parbati Rawat, 21 found deaths inside chhau hut due to cold in Achham (My Republica, Dec. 2019). The deaths of women are reported each year as a result of exposure, bites by poisonous snakes or scorpions or animal attacks while staying inside chhaupdi hut, however the exact statistics of deaths are not available ((United Nations, 2011). It may be the reason of illegal practice according to national law. In this way, menstruation stigma is not only a single problem of chhaupadi, but also the multiple complications are lying inside there.

6.2. Chhaupadi in Feminist Perspective

Bell Hooks quoted Friedan's famous phrase "The problem that has no name" at the very beginning part in her book "Feminist theory: margin to center" to describe the condition of women in the society which is totally fit in this case of chhaupadi tradition to refer the plight of social restriction. And she enhances feminism is said to be the movement to end women's oppression (Hooks, 2000, p. 26). The chhaupadi tradition is a burning example of women's oppression because the tradition is created by patriarchy. "Women, who are powerless to change their condition in life, they are a silent majority; a mark of their victimization is that they accept their lot in life without visible question, organized protest, without collective anger and rage" (ibid p. 1). Patriarchy created the tradition and without any question women followed it as their duty and responsibility for being a female. Simone de Beauvoir said "typical feature of women is to resignation that engenders the patience often admired in women. They withstand physical suffering much better than man; they deal with cries, miseries, and misfortune more energetically. They are capable of stoic courage when circumstances demand it" (Beauvoir, 2010, p. 728). We can relate it with the situation of those female who are practicing Chhaupadi.

We can just imagine how difficult to stay inside hut during menstruation or for 5 days every month is quite hard but they have stoic courage to accept it as traditional responsibility. Women are accepting what is, they don't break the silence instead they are champion to withstand mountain of sufferings and melancholies. According to Frazer cited by Beauvoir, "Men make God" and "Women worship them". "Men don't kneel down in front of idols they themselves have created but women meekly bow down before them" (ibid 727). So they are the men who created the culture of chhaupadi in the name of tradition and women they are embracing it without any visible question and bowing down towards it. "Those are the women who mistrust the future and want to stop time. If the idols her father, brothers, and husband propose are knocked down, she cannot imagine any way of repopulating the heavens she is determined to defend them" (ibid p. 728). This means, women who don't believe themselves and their capabilities, just depend on their father, brother and husband who are the idol of their life and they can't reject them what they proposed. If we relate it with chhaupadi tradition, then it doesn't remain as exception. It is because of their schooling from childhood. One of a South Asian feminist activists states, "in most of south Asian cultures the birth of a son is celebrated, the birth of a daughter is bemoaned; sons are showered with love, respect, better food, and better health care. Boys are encouraged to be tough and outgoing; girls are encouraged to be demure and home-bound" (Kamala, 2000, p. 4) and "Men are considered as heads of households, bread-winners, owners and managers of property, and active in politics, religion, business and the professions. Women on the other hand are expected and trained to bear and look after children , to nurse the infirm and old, do all household work and so on" (ibid, p 7). This statement clearly shows the perception towards female and their state of affairs in the society. So, chhaupadi is one of a system of gender discrimination or gender inequity.

One of the Indian author talks about the Asian women's experiences of oppression at the hands of patriarchal power, the power always belongs to male. Therefore, sighted these discriminations and suppressions emerged various feminist movements in Asia, to fight for the women's rights and equal rights, claim to represent all women regardless of class, caste, or religious affiliations, and prohibit violent practice against women in south Asia (Kapur, 2012). If we talk about chhaupadi in this relation, it is a form of oppression by patriarchy. Here, an additional view of prominent feminist critic (Tyson, 2014) that he calls 'the fate of women are so programmed with the patriarchal values that they cannot realize oppressions cast upon them. Further, they assume

the patriarchal values as their own and they become ‘patriarchal-women’ Lois Tyson calls. In this chhaupadi context, mothers, grandmothers and mother-in-laws are ‘patriarchal-women’ who cannot realize the oppressions cast upon them through menstruation taboo and chhaupadi practice and even they monitor to follow their daughters and daughter in-laws as well. Feminism is described as politics in (Phillips, 1998, pp. 1-67), aroused in response to western traditions that restricted the rights of women at the very beginning but later on feminist thought consumed global expression and deviations. So, feminism speaks about women rights, and always believes on social, economic and political equality for women. Feminism advocates for women’s rights, freedom and equality in global sphere, and then if we observe through the feminist spectacle, chhaupadi appears as violence against women with no doubt. Chhaupadi has violated the several international laws, treaties, conventions, and human rights. It should be addressed through government level, local and community level in collaboration and cooperation with diaconal and humanitarian organizations.

6.3. Coping with Stigma Regarding the Chhaupadi Tradition

The empowerment is only way to cope with or abolish this bitter circumstances of chhaupadi. It is explained in book of Diakonia, “Empowerment is a process that brings with it a change of attitude and a change of life, this process belongs to those who used to be more or less passive of social help” (Nissen, 2012, p. 22). It means empowerment is the procedure for changing attitude of all level of people from crawler to frontrunner. “Empowerment is the notion of power it requires two conditions power can change and power can expand” (ibid p.29). According to the definition of empowerment, people can be changed through their attitude, power and perception. If people become powerful they can change their daily life, mindset and everything as misconception about menstruation as well. It plays the title role to destroy the tradition like chhaupadi. World Bank defines empowerment as “the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes” (Ruth et al 2006, p. 1). Here empowerment is taken as a process to help individual or groups in making choice and take them into their desired actions. Though, individual and groups’ choice shouldn’t affect other’s rights and opportunities of justice at all. In the same way, according to Julian Rapport, “empowerment suggests a sense of control over one’s life in

personality, cognition, and motivation. It expresses itself at the level of feelings, at the level of ideas about self-worth, at the level of being able to make a difference in the world around us” (Dietrich, Reflections on Core Aspects of Diaconal Theory, 2014, p. 21). Rapport has given emphasis to individual empowerment, where personal feelings, ideas, and dignity are highlighted. On the one hand, community empowerment is individual empowerment because without individual empowerment community empowerment seems difficult. Since both individual and group/community empowerment is important for one another. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines empowerment as “the process by which people gain control over the factors and decisions that shape their lives. It is the process by which they increase their assets and attributes and build capacities to gain access, partners, networks and/ or a voice, in order to gain control” (WHO, 2015). This means empowerment is the capacity building process to gain access in order to get control over the factors and decisions of the person and community. So, empowerment is most important in life of all people but more especially for those who are excluded, discriminated, marginalized and unequal in justice and opportunities from society like victims of chhaupadi tradition.

The “Empowerment theories are based on a fundamental respect for the capacities and resource of all human beings which also serve as a basic principle within diakonia” (Dietrich, Reflections on Core Aspects of Diaconal Theory, 2014, p. 23). Through the specific process, empowerment usage human capacity and dignity to raise the voice for them, hence human capacity and dignity are significant for empowerment and diakonia. “As a theological concept, empowerment refers to the biblical understanding of creation that every human being is created in the image of God, with capacities and abilities, independent of their apparent social situation” (LWF, 2009, p. 45). Hence, God has given every human being capacities and abilities which should be equally treated and respected by each other in the society. “Empowerment is at the heart of diaconal and justice seeking activities and can be seen as an overarching characteristic or goal much of the churches and church-related organization” (WCC, 2005). Here empowerment is defining as main goal of justice seeking activities or church-related organization. According to Nordstokke, empowerment has a “God given goal (telos) of energizing people to participate in God’s project and rearranging God’s good intention for creation and summon society: of mutual love and care, and of promoting human dignity and justice” (Nordstokke, 2013, p. 194). This denotes God’s good intention rearranging through the way of empowerment with human dignity and justice

which energize the people for good creation. Connecting with these definitions along with theological perspective, we can perceive the empowerment is not a single approach rather multi-dimensional outline which aims to provide life skills on effective communication, problem-solving, and decision-making. It equips the people to generate a well-versed choice in life, learn to voice an opinion, seek rights for social security, and say no to violence and exploitation dynamically because every people are equal creation of God with same value and dignity. So, only the empowerment can be a proper appliance for the eradication or coping with unusual practice like chhaupadi. “Empowerment is a process of restoring and establishing relationship, its goal is self-esteem activated and energized in dignified relations with others” (ibid p. 194). Chhaupadi practicing-ladies have lost their self-esteem, courage due to the feelings of guilt and humiliation during their personal quarantine at hut, so the empowerment can cope with them restoring relations with human dignity.

Poverty, illiteracy and inequality are burning example of prevalent injustice (Watts, L., & Hodgson, D., 2019). It is not difficult to see the chhaupadi tradition as a widespread injustice. Justice or social justice can help to abolish this harmful tradition. Justice or social justice is mostly defined as the fair and justifiable distribution of power, resources, and compulsions in society to all people, regardless of race or ethnicity, age, gender, ability status, sexual orientation and religious or spiritual background (Bos, 2003). The essential morals underlying this definition include values of inclusion, collaboration, cooperation, equal access, and equal opportunity. When a stigmatized people get empowered can fight for the justice. Justice means equity and equality for all not only opportunity but also right and duties. If the individual along with community equipped, there is the possibility of new beginning from darkness to brightness because right and wrong can be distinguished just with the help of knowledge. Knowledge helps people to grasp the rights of life.

Through the process of raising awareness among men and women at community level targeting traditional healers, priests, adolescent, vulnerable groups and other needy ones, we can empower them and enable for the life skills on problem-solving, communicating and decision-making along with the voice an opinion. We can arrange the advocacy campaigns against chhaupadi together with posters and booklets. Government can take strict actions in against of those people who impose the rule of tradition. There are so many national and international organizations that

can help to fight for justice in favor of victims. Therefore, through the tools of empowerment and justice, we can overcome the harmful traditions and cultures including chhaupadi.

6.4. Reasons behind the Continuation of Chhaupadi

1) Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which male remains as a dominant character who leads, oppresses and exploits women (Walby, 1990). It is based on power relations that create hierarchy between male and female where male control over female is as they desire. (Acker, 2006), inscribes, “Patriarchy is structural relation between men and women roots in male dominance which is found primarily in family” (p.22). The International Nepalese Youth Forum (2008) indicated that patriarchy is deep-rooted in the minds of many people in Nepal. A male-dominated society establishes a form of gender inequality, discrimination and violence against women. Nepal is an example of patriarchal society because women are treated accordingly to the traditional beliefs, men remain as head of the family and women are just responsible for the household work. Women don't have the opportunity for public lives, economic sector, political participation and decision making. Then, they can easily accept the discrimination laden upon them because they are not well familiar about their rights. So, it is obvious that the chhaupadi practice violates women's rights because it limits their capability of living safe and healthy lives, and in some cases it removes girls' opportunities in attending school. It is designed by traditional culture and power structures like patriarchy tradition and others (Sandbakken, 2011). One of the famous feminist critics (Tyson, 2014) calls the fate of women is automated with the patriarchal values that they cannot realize oppressions cast upon them. They assume the patriarchal values as their own and become 'patriarchal-women'. In case of chhaupadi tradition in Nepal, without knowing their own oppression, rural women are following the tradition as their own values as a 'patriarchal-women' because they are overshadowed by the norms of patriarchy.

2) Local Belief System of Chhaupadi Tradition

It is believed that if women touch forbidden things during their menstruation period then it brings disaster, cholera, diarrhea, Sandston, landslides, heavy rain etc. And not surviving with chhaupadi norms sometimes it brings premature death and sudden accident. If they entered into temple violating the chhaupadi norms can be mad, even can be reached into mouth of death, and sometimes they can be faint on the spot, their eyes can be damaged and so on (khadka, 2014). All of these are superstitious beliefs which are the reason for the continuation of chhaupadi tradition. It is because of the fear of bad lucks occurrence they don't dare to violate the culture. As I understand, they have these kinds of misunderstanding and blind belief upon the pseudo-proclamation is due to the lack of education. They don't have ideas to break the silence for it; they don't have courage and confidence to combat with this practice. They don't have knowledge about the science behind catastrophe which is not related with women's menstruation process. It is essential to reset the mindset of those people who have direct involvement with the tradition. It is not possible to eliminate it until they don't have the self-realization that it is malpractice.

3) Religion and Culture

Chhaupadi tradition is based on Hindu religion in Nepal (KC, 2018). The ideas of pollution, purity, auspiciousness and inauspiciousness are related with caste and gender. The concept of purity and impurity has been described with specific belief system in Hindu culture. It is stated, "In Hindu culture, menstruation (a reproductive health element) is considered religiously impure and ceremonially unclean. There are many socio-cultural taboos being practiced by females during menstruation" (khadka, 2014, p. 27). He denotes chhaupadi is the product of Hindu cultural conception during menstruation. Chhapadi tradition is prevalent with male domination societal status, offensive situation of female and linking of culture with religion (Ranabhat et al. 2015). The predominant ideology of purity and pollution treats with the states of people, gender and their action. The event such as birth, death and miscarriage are considered as impure and during these period these people can't have interaction with others or these people are prohibited from impure to pure. Women are measured as bodily impure during menstruation. Similarly, the so-called lower caste people are treated as impure and prohibited to enter the house of so-called higher caste. So-called lower caste people work with leather, eat beef, and remove the dead

animals which are perceived as impure according to Hindu religion and culture. It denotes that there are several conditions to be impure according to culture and tradition. Among them menstruation is a condition of impurity, relating it with the religion menstruating women are sent to chhaupadi hut for isolation from the family members and society. Therefore, due to the norms and values of religion and culture chhaupadi is still in practice. Religion is very sensitive thing in human life so it is hard to change the mindset of the people in relation to chhaupadi but it is not in out of reach.

4) Continuation of Tradition/Culture

Some of the girls and women know the process of menstruation which is the sign of maturity and womanhood. It is the state of fertility and not the matter of sin and impurity. However they are still practicing as other women do who are not conscious about it. They are practicing it just because of the continuation of tradition. All have done by their mothers, grandmothers so; they also are doing the same. Here, I can say, they are driven by the preserve mentality forces. In many cases, mother-in-laws support harmful practices because they are the common source of information regarding SRHR (Sexual and reproductive health and rights). According to the Restless Development Nepal end line Survey, 54.4% of respondents indicated that they still received information from mother-in-laws about SRHR. Therefore, to ensure that mother-in-laws are associates in the process and to endorse family and community dialogue (Restless Development Nepal, 2018). Mother-in-laws have the vital role for this tradition.

5) Fear of Social Exclusion and Blames of Misfortune

Several young people around those areas where chhaupadi is common don't believe in this practice. They take it as an ill practice. Though, they can't stand against it due to the fear of being hated and socially excluded. Due to this reason the chhau sheds are rebuilt in almost equal numbers in Guthu Village Development Council (VDC) of Surkhet district after they were once destroyed in 2015 under the massive campaign. In the coordination with social organizations, the VDC had destroyed a total 193 communities and personal Chhau sheds (My Republica,

december, 2019). This report indicates that destruction of chhau hut is not the solution rather destruction of blind mentality is important. When we destroy the hut, they suffer more because they have to separate themselves living even under open sky, if there is no hut. Therefore, slow and steady process of empowering and encouraging them through several awareness programs may change their thinking manner. I have already described above in chapter 5, most women are following the tradition due to the fear of being embattled by their family and society. On the subject of Men, they are not sensitive towards women's difficulties, in one of the above stories a lady had uttered, even in the cold winter their heart doesn't melt for letting to live in house. Those women and girls follow the norms of society simply because they don't want to bring troubles to themselves. They can't do what they believe but they do what society believe and command. They have the fear of social exclusion. They also have the fear of blamed to be a causing of misfortune if coincidentally occurred in family or society. They don't have the knowledge of logical explanation to defend with it so they are compel to follow the practice.

6) Lack of Education

I assume that one important reason of the continuation of chhaupadi culture is lack of sex education. In Nepal, sex education is neglected in school; menstruation bleeding is the subject of shame, fear and laughter. Neither teacher teaches nor do students discuss about it comfortably. It is broadly described about the "bodily changes during adolescent and what it means" just in ninth grade of public school (around 14/15 years old) but most girls get their period in grade six or seven (11/12 years old) (Gajurel, December, 2019). This means it is too late to learn about menstruation period in school. Society just considered it as impure so they can't talk about it even in their family members especially to male. So, the girls while they start menstruating, they don't receive accurate information what it means and the things they need to pay attention like hygiene and diets. Gajurel writes further, if we go to "buy sanitary pads in shop/store, a shopkeeper either male or female, carefully wraps it with a piece of newspaper and gives us" (ibid). It is not only the topic of shame and bleeding vaginas taboo but also the hygiene products to be ashamed. Therefore, in my view it should be included in school curriculum as sex education for their better understanding about their own body and changes. To understand what the meaning of it and for what is they need consideration. If all male and female aware about it,

there is the possibility of reducing chhaupadi tradition and changing the perception towards menstruation.

7. Social Status of Women in Nepalese Society

Women are considered as a household and men as a head of the family, women always remain in second position in patriarchal society, Nepal (Subedi, 2010). Women have fewer opportunities to participate in social lives, economical level, political participation and decision-making level. They don't have own decision in their lives. A girl can't make decision even to choose her own life partner in Nepalese societies where boys are free to choose everything in their life. It is said that 'men and women are the two wheels of the same cart' and Christian theology of creation, preaches that "everybody is created in the image of God with the same value and dignity" (Dietrich, 2014, p. 30) but in Nepalese societies it is not in practical. Though, concepts of gender discrimination is changed or socialized in few educated societies but it is not good enough to change the life of women of the nation at present situation. Women are always control by their father in childhood, by husband after marriage and by son at old age (Niraula, 2007). So, gender discrimination is creating low status of women in Nepal than other women in the world.

Women's status in Nepalese society is poor in economic, educational, decisions making, opportunities and social participations sectors. Women seem to be second category compared to man in almost societies of Nepal. According to (CBS, 2014), in census 2011 there are 51% female of total population in Nepal, which is 94 (94 male for 100 female) in sex ratio. Due to the socio-economic, cultural and religious belief, women's status is low in comparison to men. Lack of opportunities in various sector, women rights, social exclusion, level of education are the key reasons behind this circumstances of women in societies. Women in Nepalese societies can't get equal educational opportunities like men because in almost all family boy can go to school at least for minimum level of education where in case of girls it is not applicable. (CIA, 2020) Report shows the literacy rate of Nepal is 67.9% of total population, where male has 78.6% male female has 59.7%. From this literacy rate we can easily identify female are still distant from education opportunities in Nepalese societies. So, lack of education is one of the key reasons of female's backwardness from male in the societies. These are the examples of why women's

status is low in all over the nation in general but to be specific in relation to chhaupadi practicing regions women and girls are under the triple marginalized condition. 1st they are the rural village women that means they are geographically marginalized, and then female marginalization due to gender discrimination and again they are compel to follow the extreme tradition like chhaupadi, this means more marginalized in compare to other females around the country. They have the high degree of suffering and stigma in relation to the tradition. So, all of these facts and reports prove the lower status of women in Nepal. Then, no doubt this lower status of female is another significant reason for the continuation of chhaupadi in those rural areas of Nepal.

6.5 Challenges in Eradication of Chhaupadi

Chhaupadi is deep rooted cultural tradition based on Hindu religious belief. It is unscientific and harmful practice so government has declared it illegal and criminalized with 3 months jail and 3000 Nepali rupees fine or both for those who force to ladies to stay in chhau hut during menstruation. National and international humanitarian/diaconal organizations are working on this. Though, many women have still engaged in this practice. This research has pounded with the key factors as challenges in eradicating process of this practice. Some of them are as follows:-

1. Challenges in changing mindset: - Those ladies who are the victims of this practice, they themselves are preserving this tradition because of their illiteracy and ignorance. So, they don't create unity to go in against of it, they don't raise their voice and don't file the complaints. They just follow silently. They accept it as their own responsibility as being female. They are habituated in believing that they become impure during their period. In chapter 5, in most of the stories, especially, story A and B, they have expressed their feelings that "they go to chhau hut because they feel uneasy to stay at home during menstruation; their psyche doesn't let them to stay at home". This means, menatally and psychologically they accept themselves as "impure" and "sin" during menstruation. So, changing mentality/mindset of victims themselves is challenging thing in the process of eradicating this evil practice.

It is difficult to change mindset of those people who are influenced by this tradition directly or indirectly. Especially, in Rambha's story (Story I), "She goes to clean herself and her clothes in a nearby stream but villagers and family members accuse her of making the whole stream impure. The problem gets fixed when she had guaranteed that she would not repeat her actions in the future but elderly people and others in the community hesitate to use the stream water for a long time". So, it is challenging part to convince and educate the older generations.

UMN's HTP (harmful traditional practice) manager Shrijana, opines that "since chhaupadi is a social tradition deep rooted in culture and religion, it is not so easy to take action and change the attitude of people and expect results". From this statement we can assume that how difficult is to change the mind and behavior of the people. And adviser of this program Liv Wendel explains her positive expectations that "our approach to this is community empowerment through group mobilization. We work with all the different levels in the community- children, youth, women, men, community leaders and media. By working with these groups, we hope change will come from the inside" (UMN, December, 2016, p. 9). From this statement we can clearly understand that inside change is essential to eradicate such harmful practices and she is hopeful in inside transformation of the people. So, there is challenge but hope also left is there.

2. There is huge gap between law making and implementation sectors of the government. Government has been failed in ruled out it strictly. In last December a 21 years girl died when she was observing this tradition (My Republica, Dec. 2019), and this incident is sufficient to see the above mentioned gap because it is declared that this is the first case from government taken action in against of the tradition imposer. So, it seems challenging even to file complaints due to the lack of action implementation, support for victims in relation to social, legal, and psychological assistance.
3. There is the lack of continuous support and follow up from government's side and other organizations as well. For example, they come once and destroy the chhau hut then disappear for long time then again chhau hut starts to rebuild (Chhaupadi still rampant in Bajura district, june, 2018). They don't destroy the inside darkness of the people, just destroy the chhau hut. They don't give strict continuation for it which is challenging part.

4. Illiteracy and poverty is the challenging thing to make them understanding and set them free from the cage of evil practice.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

7.0. Chapter Introduction

This chapter concludes the study with the overall summary of the research, findings and discussions, then finally, a brief recommendation.

7.1. Summary

The main objective of this thesis was to present the findings about the key causes of problematic issues and credible resolutions in order to support for the eradication of chhaupadi pratha (of being untouchable tradition during menstruation period). The prime focus of the researcher was to depict the reality, how the rural women are suffering and stigmatized due to this practice in mid-and far-west Nepal. Stigma theory, Feminist, empowerment and justice theory were used to analyze the findings of research.

In this research the qualitative research method was employed. The researcher didn't collect the primary data through interviews and field research process due to pandemic COVID-19. It was not possible to visit Nepal, all for this. Despite these, researcher has been able to collect information as secondary data from various research papers, journals, articles, reports, books, websites of organizations and governmental websites to get information related to this research. This thesis has been completed through theoretical perspective. Findings are presented and interpreted with critical analysis.

The major findings of the research that the rural women in mid-and far-west Nepal are facing stigma by isolating themselves from family, friends and society considering 'impure', 'unclean' and 'untouchable' during menstruation in the name of chhaupadi tradition. It is believed that everything they touch becomes impure. So, due to the banishment of touching everything inside house, especially male members, like husband, father, brothers or any other relatives, they are compelled to stay in chhaupadi hut which is far from the house. With the feeling of exclusion, alienation, insecurity, self-disrespect guilt and humiliation they are depressed and irritated during

self-isolated period in hut. Moreover, due to the poor structure of chhau hut many women and girls have beard death by suffocation, cold, snakebite, animal attack and rape. This is the main challenge of this extreme tradition. The traditional rules are applied from girls' menarche until menopause, even in post-partum period of women. Therefore, it is the life threatening condition for both neonatal and mother. This research found multiple problems regarding this practice by mentally, physically and psychologically. However, they have continued the tradition just because of the fear of social exclusion and fear of being blamed of any misfortune occurred in family or society. This tradition violates the human rights of women and new born, along with teenager girls. Therefore, the government has been banned and criminalized this practice. Along with the government, many organizations NGOs, INGOs have been working on it through the mobilization of various awareness programs, campaigns, empowerment projects. Despite this many women are still engaged in this practice although in a lesser degree.

Additionally, this research has found the way of coping with stigma regarding the tradition, education and empowerment as the key factors to change mind-set of both parties those who impose the practice on women, and also of the women themselves who have been conditioned to believe that menstruation creates a supposed impurity within them because until they don't realize the tradition is harmful and violating their rights, it is difficult to stop the tradition. So, only the education and empowerment can bring them inner realization, changes in their life and thinking manner as well. Changing the mind-set is crucial in eradication of chhaupadi.

7.2. Recommendations

- To eradicate this tradition and reduce the culture based gender discrimination, the government of Nepal, national and international organizations, local representatives, lawmakers and who are involved in the development and implementation of rules, policies and laws need to work collaboratively in a methodical way.
- It is necessary to change the mind-set of not only of those who impose the practice on women, but also of the women themselves who have been conditioned to believe that menstruation creates a supposed impurity within them because they are master of their own life. Until they don't realize by themselves that this practice is harmful and no truth

inside pseudo-statement as ‘impurity’ and ‘unclean’, it is difficult to stop the practice. So, those females should be empowered.

- The awareness about female health issues like menstruation, menstrual hygiene, taboos associated with menstruation, reproductive health, and human rights of women should be provided regularly and effectively to the local level where chhaupadi is prevalence.
- School should provide the health education along with sex, reproductive systems in details from early age before their menarche.
- It is necessary to educate for those people about social stigmas and dangers of chhaupadi.
- Finally, for eradication of this tradition, government has initiated legal actions and campaigns destroying chhau hut, which is really appreciable though, we need to handle it very carefully. Chhau related fear is deep rooted in the mindset of the people so both legal action and raising awareness should drive hand in hand.

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