



## Puberty Period among Different Religions, Traditions, and Societies

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**Received:** 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022

**Accepted:** 11<sup>th</sup> July 2022

**Published:** 4<sup>th</sup> August 2022

### ABSTRACT

Puberty is crucial stage of female's life. Several physiological alterations accompanying the teenage years evident them in a lot of complex and curious means to which females show different reactions. Even though this stage of a female's life is normal, it is often associated with some degree of suffering and embarrassment, it is mainly due to a sense of hesitation. The main event of puberty is the onset of the menstrual cycle; menstruation is a health, frequent physiological process which has been distorted and spoiled with negative implications. Many religions around the world have set expectations for females during their menstrual period. This paper discusses how females during puberty must behave and be seen in many religions. Additionally, it drives debates on how different societies treat and view females during the menstrual period. Adolescent girls must be educated on how to go about the topics surrounding puberty, and the normal physiological changes that happen during the period at school. Societies, families, and teenagers themselves are in charge of working together to create an environment in which accurate info on puberty and related subjects is readily available.

**Keywords:** Puberty, Traditions, rituals, Menstrual period, female

## INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization has defined adolescents as young persons between the ages of 10 and 19. Fast alterations result from hormonal alterations which accelerate the physical growth & development of secondary sexual features that typically take place during adolescence (1). "Thelarche which is the beginning of postnatal breast development often happens during puberty in adolescents. Thelarche is considered the first physical change in puberty in the majority of females" (2).

Adolescence is the main period in a human lifetime, noticeable at the beginning of puberty. It is a phase when teenagers go from childhood to maturity. Presently, teenagers represent autonomous persons in world healthcare organizations. The girl's lifetime consists of many phases and milestones such as infancy, childhood, puberty, marriage, pregnancy, childbearing period, and menopause (3). Additionally, puberty has many challenges which can impact not only the up growing of a female but can even affect her children. Adolescents are challenged by a host of individual and social concerns accompanying puberty which if not addressed can have adverse consequences for the next generations (4). Therefore, healthy mothers form the basis of the wealth and welfare of any community. The physiologic alterations accompanying puberty are frequently noticeable themselves in the complex and unique approach, and women can respond to these alterations. A study in the United States of America stated that there is an important dissimilarity between black females and white females in terms of their bad emotional state toward puberty (5).

Some women are not ready for thelarche and menarche at the onset of puberty which results in negative consequences, for example, bad body image, concern over their appearance, low self-esteem, and even delay in the diagnosis of breast tumours (6). Menarche is often accompanied by numerous biological modifications that include physiologic, sexual, cognitive, and emotional features and can result in teenage mood illnesses. It's not only hormones that are overdue mood disturbance among adolescents; puberty could be a puzzled and challenged time (7).

The menstrual period is a normal physiologic phenomenon in girls representing the female's capability for reproduction. However, this phenomenon is not easy. It is frequently associated with many degrees of suffering, shame, and embarrassment (8). It is a common observation that every girl experiences one or more types of menstrual period complications in her lifetime. These

teenagers are rarely educated about the menstrual period until they experience it for the first time. This is mostly a traumatic experience for adolescent girls. If the girls are well informed about the menstruation period that will aid them later on in life (9).

There is a considerable deficiency in the studies on the menstrual cycle period among adolescent teenagers. Several types of research exposed this cavity and revealed that there is a low level of consciousness regarding the menstrual period among adolescents when they experienced it for the first time (10). Community prohibitions and the un-positive attitudes of mothers and fathers in openly debating the menstrual cycle have obstructed the reaching of adolescent females to correct type of facts, particularly in rural and ethnic societies (11).

The menstrual period and its practices are yet shadowed by prohibitions and sociocultural limitations. The menstrual period is the recurrent detaching of the uterine endometrium under the hormonal outcome of the hypo-thalamo-pituitary axis. The menstrual period is linked with several mistaken beliefs and false practices that from the time-to-time result in adverse health consequences. Menstrual cycle disorders are communal presenting complaint among teenage groups and un-hygienic practices throughout the menstrual period may lead to unpleasant consequences such as pelvic inflammatory diseases and may also result in infertility (12).

### **Tradition and beliefs around the menstrual period**

The menstrual cycle period is generally considered unclean in many societies. The separation of menstruating females and limitations forced on these females in families have strengthened an undesirable attitude toward the usual phenomenon. Numerous researchers have stated the limitations during daily actions; they believe in specified prohibitions during the menstrual time (13).

Subsequently the traditional social limitations on debating sexual and reproductive well-being and associated subjects, numerous teenagers suffer from deficiencies in suitable and sufficient info about puberty and period health. It can lead to wrong and harmful behaviours throughout the period. Menstrual period and health during puberty are seldom discussed at home or even at school (14). Yet, "sexual and reproductive health" instruction has not been evidently and entirely provided by schools, social mass media, and or family. Moreover, a study recommended that reproductive health instruction creativities that include mums may be suitable by using social and religious and

spiritual sensitivities and in keeping with the needs of females themselves. The bulk of females called menarche is the most unpleasant pubertal occurrence. This comprised many feelings like disgust, fear, embarrassment, surprise, and feeling of sickness (15).

Approximately each fertile female experiences nearly a quarter of her life struggling with these cultural and societal prohibitions, some religious traditions encompass guidelines and rituals that mark a female as unclean or dangerous, even if she has no control over the normal body function. Religions have been considered to have an important effect on sexuality, defining normative and disciplining the abnormal (16).

For several centuries, medicine with religion both have systematically devaluated roles apportioned to adolescent girls and excepted females from an authority in the community through male-controlled philosophies about female reproductive physique. It's unmovable and evident in several contemporary cultures and religions. Around the world females are encouraged by beliefs and religions to avoid specific actions like; food preparation, working, praying, and having sexual contact during the period, as they considered being in a state of dirtiness (17).

Evidence displays that through puberty, adolescent girls hold and solidify the gender customs of their societies. Therefore, the way girls and boys perceive themselves within their families, communities, and societies can be extremely altered for the rest of their lives. In some circumstances, puberty leads to increased social limitations for teenage girls and increased social autonomy for boys. Countless adolescents, particularly girls, will suffer from a severe drop in self-confidence during the period of puberty (18).

### **Rituals among several religions**

The menstrual cycle is stigmatized in several societies. This stigma built up because of traditional beliefs about the uncleanness of females during the menstrual cycle period and the unwillingness to discuss this theme normally. Most religions denote menstruating females as unclean related to rituals. This results in much embarrassment for young adolescents. They were not knowledgeable fine, later they have a tendency to hold many misconstructions and misunderstandings. The degree of following the instructions and the practices followed differs from family to family in the same religion and community. It is determined by their beliefs and how toughly they hold traditional practices (19).

Religious rituals and cultures across the world command a variety of actions that are prohibited during the menstrual period. Limitations in activities because of religious belief were anecdotally reported by a number of religions (20).

**1. Jewish rituals:** As seen in some Jewish traditions, articulates firm rules regarding various aspects of the usual daily lives of Jews, involving their sexual life. In the sections on Impure discharges, sexual actions and serious crimes have been mentioned the following: In Leviticus 15:19 and also 24 articulated: "If a female has a discharge, and her emission in her flesh is blood, she shall be 7 days in her menstrual period separation, and anybody who touches her shall be impure till evening (21). And if any male lies with her at all and her menstrual period separation will be upon him, he will be unclean for 7 days; this rule debates how the females and anyone who touches her throughout her cycle are ritually not clean. In Leviticus 15, it's forbidden to have sexual contact with a woman during the period. Leviticus 18:19 warns: "Also you shall not approach a female in the impure time of her menstrual period separation, to expose her nakedness. Leviticus 20:18 mentions: "And if a man lies with a menstruating woman and reveal her nakedness, and she exposed the fountain of her blood, both of them will be cut off from among their people (22). These laws state that individuals may not have sexual contact with the female during the period. There is also a discussion about the females' isolation from others which occurs once giving birth: when the newborn is female, the mother is isolated from others for 14 days, then is completely clean afterwards 66 days, the mother may then carry a sacrifice to the holy place shrine. When the newborn is a boy mother is isolated for 7 days, and then delays 33 days (23).

As stated by a ritual, an Orthodox Jewish married female is accountable for immersing in the bath to be ritually pure, the ritual baths, and only then will she become ritually pure and clean. Man-woman interaction in any form; not only because of bleeding which results from the normal menstrual period but to any kind of vaginal bleeding, whether it results from menstruation or other health problems. Regardless the cause is uterine or vaginal bleeding; must be 7 days of abstinence after the last day in which blood is seen. To Leviticus 15, it's firmly prohibited to have any somatic interaction between a man-woman throughout her period of menstruation and 7 days after that (21). This comprises sharing things between males and females, for instance, bed, food, or utensils, besides from sitting together on the same sofa. The source of these rules of family pureness is that period blood is ritually considered as unclean. Brides do not immerse in the mikveh (bath to be considered a clean one) till they are planned to be married; thus, all single women are assumed to

be in a state of niddah (Jewish term that means menstruating female) (25). Moreover, Jewish purity rules stated that the female who has had her 1st period is not permitted to be touched by another man. Further limitations are put on married women during the menstrual cycle period. These prohibitions comprise games and sporting, directly holding or getting things; it must be sited on the surface, then and there may be picked by a husband and eating from the same dish (26).

Women were taught not to walk between 2 men at the beginning of their menstrual period which would result in detriments between the two of them and when she walk at the end of her period, she would be a reason for death for one of them. This displays the threat that was thought that resulted because of menstruating females. The threat was believed not in blood, it also in the air surrounding her. Grounded on an analysis of many studies, it recorded that, in spite of the bans, approximately all participants stated disobeying at least once throughout the ritual period (27). Only after the menstrual cycle period, after a habitual bath, are the partners allowed to physically contact each other again. Lassies who grow up in these traditions may accept them without thinking. Modern orthodoxy emphasizes kindness, love, and companionship between partners. "It is believed [by modern orthodoxy] that following these rules will result in the husbands to view his wives as a same and equal human being, as opposed to a sexual thing." (28).

**2. Christianity rituals:** In the past, the menstrual cycle forbidden has been the main cause to keep females from places of authority in Christianity. Its similar to Judaism several Catholics believe that a female must not practice sexual contact throughout the period. In the "Eastern Orthodox Christian Church", the menstrual period is reflected as impure. Sharing of rituals, particularly closeness, or touching holy things such as Bible or religious representations are not permitted for menstruating females (29). Russian Orthodox Christians have faith in menstrual prohibitions. Females during the menstrual period must live in private shelters through this period. Females don't join church amenities, can't interact with males, and don't touch uncooked or fresh meals. A menstruating gas is also believed to impact climate adversely. Whereas western Christian rituals are less restricted, some undesirable practices and beliefs still persist (30).

**3. Islamic rituals:** In the holy book Quran, 2:222 states, "They ask you about menstruation. Say, 'It is an impurity, so keep away from women during it and do not approach them until they are cleansed; when they are cleansed you may approach them as God has ordained...'. Islamic rituals are similar to Judaism in that the female has to finish ritual bathing before she becomes pure and

clean once more (31). Hadith in the Islamic religion is a kind of blood which is discharged from the uterus of a female each month. Muslim beliefs do not consider females during their period unclean; though, the Islamic rule treats the menstrual period as impure only to religious roles. There are 2 exclusions positioned upon a menstruating female. Firstly, she must not enter a mosque or other shrine. Furthermore, during the period it's not permitted to pray or fast throughout the month of Ramadan. Females should not touch the holy Quran or even recite it inside. Females during their period are not permitted to have sexual intercourse with their partner (32). Finally, menstruating females cannot perform some rituals such as daily prayers and fasting. Furthermore, the female should perform ritual bathing before the female becomes clean again. After this bathing, she can continue praying, and fasting, and is permitted to go into a mosque and all holy shrines. Though, it's thought by Islamic culture that a woman during her cycle is not omitted from living her everyday life. In Islam, it concluded the impurity of menstrual blood in no way prohibits a female from living a natural life with her family and friends. The specific action of worship in Islam is so blessed that Muslim individuals (male or female) can't complete them without he or she has certain qualifications (33).

**4. Buddhism rituals:** Menstrual period considers a normal physical flow that females have to experience each month. Conversely, in practice, this does not follow. That is a result of the impact of Hinduism religion on Buddhism. Several shrines don't permit females to circumambulate nearby the Stupas. Throughout the period females are thought to miss Qi which is usually spelt as chi, which is supposed to be a portion of everything that is present. There's the Buddhist faith that ghosts consume blood. A female during the cycle is then believed to appeal to the ghosts and is as a result danger to herself and others. Buddha Instruction Association articulates, that during fermenting the rice, menstruating females are not permitted close the rice will be ruined (34).

**5. Sikhism rituals:** condemned practice of treating females as not clean during menstruating. Menstruating females are permitted to visit religious residences and pray. There is no limitation to movement in the home or outdoor. The Sikh scripture refuses sexism. It confirms females' creative and usual processes in community textile. It sentences the prohibitions for nearby menstruation and postpartum contamination. Somewhat, the menstrual cycle is viewed as an important and normal process (35).

**6. Hinduism rituals:** In the Indian yogic beliefs there are 3 qualities. Which are black, and red and the last one is white. Everything that is a secretion from the human body such as perspiration, blood, eye tears, etc. is considered poisonous and is categorized under *tamas*. *Tamas* is blackness or vagueness. Later customary Hindus touching a female throughout menstruating is considered unsuitable action. During the menstrual cycle, some females were not permitted to enter kitchenettes or shrines, sleep during the day, bath, dress blossoms, have sex, touch other boys or girls, raise their voices, and touch pickles (20). As stated by legends pickles are touched by menstruating female decay. The aromatic plant is reflected to be divine in Hinduism; menstruating teenagers were not permitted to touch it. In many extreme circumstances, females during the period were not permitted their shadow to drop on it; it's thought the plant later on it will die. In Hindu beliefs, females were not permitted to visit shrines during the menstruating period. Females are deliberated as ritually not clean during the menstruating period and aren't permitted to visit holy places and pray. When the menstrual cycle ends, they are cleansed with an oil bathe then they consider as clean and pure. Hinduism has several limitations but besides with that in a few areas of India, there are ceremonials to welcome the teenager to her productive age. However, after the celebrations, she has to live a limited life for 7 days each month (28).

### **Societies and Menstrual Period**

The social and religious restrictions made by cultures put the teenagers' life at risk. They keep an eye on the cultural rituals without valuation and consummate them as a portion of their lifecycle. Many adolescent females that dare to search extra become a victim of their cultural philosophies and restrictions, in the utmost countryside zones teenagers menstruating are not permitted to study at school because of orthodox beliefs. The deficiency of healthiness instruction results in unsuitable sanitation maintenance (36).

In many developing societies where females yet can't express or share regarding a normal change like the menstrual period in an open way, adolescents can't share their gloom with any male. Females must use code words such as 'Eid (celebration), guest, and salary in public areas and also in their homes. In some regions, educated individuals have brought modifications to their philosophy regarding the menstrual period and parented a healthy atmosphere where females might share their difficulties with their parents including the menstruation period. However, other regions are worst as they have loads of legends and



prohibitions (37). In several countries especially developing one female must use the part of clothes and reuse it again during her cycle. Practically all female has faith in not washing their head in the first two days of a menstrual period. The deficiency of education among adolescents is the main belief behind the presence of these beliefs. In addition to parents-teenagers communication gaps related to the menstrual cycle period and sex can be the cause behind constricted belief process of many societies. Merely a small number of teenagers are aware of the menstrual cycle before they reach their first menstrual period and also, and very few identify and recognize the hormonal and physical variations (38).

Females need to consume a suitable diet throughout and after the menstruation period so their bodies can have essential nutrients and compensate for the blood that they lose. The severe impacts may be understood when they married and in fertility later on, as the female skeleton becomes more fragile and they undergo joint pains. The social and cultural philosophies regarding the menstrual cycle period are the additional cause behind the incorrect hygienic practices among teenagers (39).

In many religions also menstruating female's shadows are considered wicked, particularly during divine occasions were not permitted to leave their chamber. However, individuals obligate in diverse religions and cultures among unlike areas, nevertheless they share a mutual way of philosophy. They must care for females through the cycle as the current of blood made them weak. The mood smacks among teenagers are very public and ought to care of throughout which interval of the month. The attitude of many societies didn't change however, the generations have. Somewhat it has been delivered to the following generation where adolescents can't dialogue about the menstrual cycle openly (40).

Nowadays, technology has carried so many improvements in every field, present the circumstances and surroundings is changed, up till now public's means of thinking hasn't improved. The preservation of health and sanitation during periods among females should be encouraged by educational courses. Most of the females are anaemic and have low haemoglobin which results from not following an appropriate and healthy regime. There is a need to inform society to generate sanitized atmosphere and follow it throughout the period (41).

## DISCUSSION

The menstruation period is a normal method to reproduce and give a spirit to a new person therefore human survival is probable year by year. The public must esteem it, as an alternative to making the menstrual period cycle a concern of embarrassment for females in terms of community, traditional and holy views. In governmental and private schools, both counselling of teenagers and their fathers and mothers can be a walking stone wherever exposed conversation around social, traditional and religious prohibitions should be achieved to bring a conceptual and interactive change among the community. That can aid in the construction of a tough relationship between parents and their children. Parents are the greatest leaders for their teenagers to direct the way and give worthy ethics to teenagers. Their responsibility is to show their offspring not to be embarrassed about menstrual cycle pigments or ashamed for buying sanitary napkins from man storekeepers. All at once men must be educated and instructed to practice positive awareness towards teenagers during the period hence, they respect and care for them psychologically. They ought to be trained to be sensible in their actions and need to challenge those social philosophies they exercise and encourage others in their environments to discourage such traditions and prohibitions.

The effect of shame and embarrassment about the menstrual period is sensed in many regions of young females' lives. It's doing as an obstacle to interaction and awareness about females' physiques, and behaviours to care for them. Teenagers also articulated the sensation feeling of the burden of societies to feel embarrassment. The shock of stained dress or leaking on underclothing and it was believed the utmost uneasy and uncomfortable occasion that might occur throughout the period. A great part of the anxiety and shame around the menstrual period in the school surroundings stemmed from the expectation of opposing responses from boys. The ever-present shame and rituals that females are facing influence meaningfully on how they experience and understand menstruation. Mothers are consistently expected to be the main foundations of facts about the menstrual period. Parents frequently feel not prepared, and uncomfortable speaking about the menstrual period which can aid to strengthen the bad attitudes surrounding the theme. The restrictions and deficiency of education about the menstrual cycle period have had several real, negative impressions on teenagers' everyday lives. The shortage of knowledge and consideration around their bodies, because they are reaching their first menstrual period and

puberty without enough emotional support, has been established to negatively impact their upcoming sexual and procreative health.

A study has revealed the negative attitudes about the menstrual period by peers and associated sexual harassment that may influence the teenagers' motivation to study, their self-confidence, and the self-respect that can lead to them having lesser motivations and job expectations. The quietness around the period furthermore leads to a deficiency of knowledge and option among young persons about recyclable menstrual period goods, and consequently the possible choices concerning their bodies. The shortage of information about the re-usable products also how to dispose carefully of non-reusable menstrual cycle products, means that this remains current environmental distress. The absence of support and teaching in schools for adolescents about the menstrual period can also lead to school nonattendance, and also lead to menstruators missing out on accomplishments like; workouts, because of distressing about leaking, besides possibly affecting their opinions about a physical workout in the future. Additionally, the shortage of knowledge around what counts as ordinary and normal related to menstrual cycle health may lead to the delay in the diagnosis of serious illnesses.

## CONCLUSION

Parallel prohibitions exist through religions and cultures. One of the steadiest performs followed include separation, prohibiting religious actions, and limit from sexual contact. Females are statically forbidden also in contemporary religions to enter the shrines. Many societies try to avoid the subject of menstruation.

Menstruation, it's the most significant biological difference between women and men. During adolescence; ladies are taught that the natural cycle is they go through "dirty" and should be covered. Females should be capable to take on the liberation of their periods and appreciate the means to be a female. The public tends to be chattier about any other bodily function than the period. This physical function is highly restricted by social values and prohibitions. These prohibitions on menstruation from many religions and cultures apply around the world.

Educating young ladies that these customs are not put into place to shame one's normal body is means by which cycle liberation can be applied. Promoting confidence & self-care has been

confirmed to provide more positive attitudes to appreciate being a female, along with promoting the enjoyment of her sexual practises.

Receiving factual and comprehensive information about biology and the different aspects to ensure that women and girls can act on their needs. In many low and medium-income nations, there is no taught and actual inadequate instruction in schools about the menstrual period. Educators are cautious or unwilling to argue about the menstrual cycle due to the rituals, being ignorant themselves. Girls are mostly receiving information from their mothers. Comprehensive sexuality education and education. Existing socio-cultural taboos and discriminatory practices around menstruation need to be reconsidered.

Knowledge of how to teach males and females about traditions and ideals of the menstrual period may result in daughters and mothers respecting the traditions at hand but will promote critical thinking and recognition of not only how they select to take care of their bodies, but also how they permit others to treat their bodies too. In addition to increasing men and boys' understanding and fostering their support, particularly by not imposing discriminatory practices; that will break the stigma around menstruation and generate an atmosphere where teenagers can reach the info and ask queries without embarrassment, shame, and judgment.

Males and females must respect a woman's body; her body means more than a vessel used for a man's pleasure. It teaches a very significant lesson; customs could be accepted without wondering, adaptations to prohibitions may be forced onto upcoming generations without sound teaching, and teenagers' bodies may be shamed because they have no control over what is happening to them.

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