



Traditional Puberty Rituals: A Comparative Study on Sinhala and Tamil Culture

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Abstract

Human life is rooted in culture. The practices of all humans are often influenced by their culture. Among them, the traditional rituals of puberty are the unique practices which characterize specific cultural performances. This study aims to identify the differences and similarities between Sinhala Buddhists and Tamil Hinduism cultural practices on Puberty rituals. The study included 20 respondents drawn from Jaffna and Colombo, according to a purposive sample, and data analysis was done with a qualitative approach. The study reveals several similarities between the two cultures. As per the study, Puberty rituals serve both cultural and spiritual purposes. It is known in Sinhala as a flowering wedding an occasion. In Tamil "Periyamanasi Agivittal" "Puppadaindu Vittal" and "Pooppadaithal" use to call for such events. During this period girls do not eat the food that she usually takes up, to the end of menstruation. For whole days, she eats traditional foods like red rice Pongal, chickpeas Pittu, gingelly oil, and eggs. Rice, vegetables, and TAMBUM Hodi (in Tamil culture, this is similar to 'Kajam', a combination of neem, cumin, and pepper) are the only foods permitted to Sinhala girls. In addition, during this period, dirty or used clothes are required to be worn by both cultures. Traditionally, menstruating girls could not wear sanitary pads in Tamil culture, but Sinhalese girls are now wearing sanitary pads that were not used in the past. These particular days were considered as 'Thudakku,' and in Sinhala, it is known as "Killa," which has a similar meaning to unclean. ." In Conclusion, there are many similarities as well as differences among the rituals but the purposes are similar.

Key words: Sinhala culture, Tamil culture, Puberty, Rituals, Taboo

1. Introduction

Culture is a way of life of a group of people and Human life is rooted in culture. Edward. B. Tylor (1917) defines "culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by (a human) as a member of society" (Lowie and Taylor,1917). Taylor viewed culture as a complex that includes a variety of fields. The practices of all

humans are often influenced by their culture. culture is the man-made environment and the people living in society, as well as the way of life they develop over time (Anuradha and Hewawasam, 2026). Rituals are society's way of sustaining, maintaining, and teaching the culture to the younger generation (Obaid & Kadim 2022). All the countries in the world follow their cultural Rituals. Rituals associated with culture reflect their own identity. Rites are considered of utmost importance in Sri Lankan culture, and they perform many customs and rituals during these life events. Among them reaching puberty is a very important event in human life and it has been celebrated since the ancient past. It is a chapter in which both sexes undergo a new transformation biologically, psychologically, and socially. Both men and women experience puberty, which is an opportunity for the Existence of human life. This study focuses primarily on the Puberty rituals associated with girls.

The first menstruation of a girl is known as puberty or menarche and it is otherwise known as age attainment, coming of age, and becoming a big girl. The secondary socialization process began at this event and thereby internalized the future responsibilities as a woman, wife, and mother in a girl's mind. The World Health Organization defines adolescents as young persons between the ages of 10 and 19 (Karunakumaran & Somasundarn 2016). Fast alterations result from hormonal alterations which accelerate the physical growth & development of secondary sexual features that typically take place during adolescence (Obaid & Kadim 2022). And according to the World Health Organization, a girl reaches puberty at this stage. Furthermore, preparation for childbirth, the beginning of breast development in females, and many physical developments in the body happen during puberty.

The girl's lifetime consists of many phases and milestones such as infancy, childhood, puberty, marriage, pregnancy, childbearing period, and menopause. 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. 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 (Obaid & Kadim, 2022). Furthermore, puberty 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. Accordingly, puberty is a psychological and biological concept that occurs in a girl. As well as, puberty is associated with the menstrual cycle. The menstrual period is a normal physiologic phenomenon in girls representing the female's capability for reproduction. Puberty is one the golden moments in a girl's life. Puberty brings about hormonal changes in a girl's body. Thus, this physical and mental process in a girl is called puberty and it varies from culture to culture. It is celebrated in many cultures based on their own rituals.

When it comes to describing the biological factors related to puberty, it is important to identify the main phases of the cycle. The female menstrual cycle is a complex, orchestrated series of physiological and hormonal events that prepare the female

reproductive system for pregnancy. It is regulated by a combination of hormonal signals from the brain, ovaries and uterus. In exploring the scientific basis of the menstrual cycle, the following facts can be uncovered. The menstrual cycle is primarily controlled by the hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian (hypothalamic*) axis. It involves several key hormones and feedback mechanisms. Gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH*) - Hypothalamus releases GnRH, which stimulates the anterior pituitary gland. Follicle-stimulating hormone (TSH) - In response to GnRH to ovulation, the anterior pituitary gland secretes TSH , which stimulates the development of follicles (small sacs of ovaries). Luteinizing hormone (LH) - GnRH also causes the release of LH from the pituitary gland. LH plays a critical role in inducing ovulation, the release of a mature egg from the mature ovaries. LH increases in response to rising estrogen levels during the follicular phase of the menstrual cycle, which causes the follicle to rupture and release the egg. Phases of Menstruation- The menstrual cycle is generally divided into several phases: Menstruation - the shedding of the uterine lining, shedding of the uterine lining due to a drop in estrogen and progesterone. Follicular phase - characterized by growth of ovarian follicles and rising estrogen levels. Ovulation - An increase in KH occurs when a mature egg is released from the follicle.

Luteal phase: This begins after ovulation and is characterized by high levels of progesterone and preparation of the uterine lining for potential implantation. Uterine Changes - Throughout the menstrual cycle, the lining of the uterus (endometrium) undergoes dynamic changes in response to hormonal signals. During the follicular phase it thickens and becomes more vascular in preparation for implantation of a potential embryo. If fertilization does not occur, the decrease in hormone levels causes the endometrium to shed during menstruation. Cervical Mucus - The consistency and amount of cervical mucus changes throughout the menstrual cycle under hormonal influence. Around ovulation, the cervical mucus becomes thinner and more slippery, making it easier for sperm to move through the cervix (Hawkins and Matzuk, 2008).

1.2 Literature Review

Various scholars and academics have identified the different cultural factors relating with puberty. In 1928, the Anthropologist Margaret Mead published "First Blood: A Culture Study of Menarche," a groundbreaking work in the field of anthropology that sheds light on the cultural and social aspects of menarche, the first menstrual cycle in human females. When Mead conducted her studies on the South Pacific islands of Samoa, she studied adolescent girls and women. According to her research, Samoan girls do not suffer from as much worry and sorrow during menarche as girls in Western nations. Mead attributes this to the fact that Samoan culture had a more laid-back and welcoming attitude towards menstruation, in which women were not subjected to the same social pressures and taboos.

In the study *Empowering the Young Women: A Study with Reference to Puberty Rituals* conducted by the researchers Karunakaran and Somasundaran (2016). The study analyzes the nature and significance of the coming-of-age rituals that are still widely celebrated in rural India. Accordingly, as a unique aspect of coming-of-age

rituals for girls in this village, the girl child is restricted to a hut made of coconut leaves. Accordingly, she has to stay in this hut until the coming-of-age ceremony is over, and this ceremony is held on the fifth day, the seventh day, the ninth day, or the eleventh day from the day of the first menstruation. During that time, the female child is given separate bowls, cups, bed sheets, and pillows for her personal use and is not allowed to go to sacred places such as the altar, other rooms of the house, or temples. Also, researchers have shown that these rituals teach the child to identify girls as mature people, to accept social responsibilities, to bear children, to manage the house, and to take care of family members. It has also been shown that during this time, the closest friends who have reached adulthood share this experience, thereby dispelling the fear of this new experience. Advice is also given by older women about the importance of cleanliness, nutritious food, training in cooking and housework, helping the mother, preparing for marriage, etc. (Karunakaran & Somasundaran, 2016).

Angala Mathew, Anto Mathew, and Babuji Mathew show the traditional cultural practices, rituals, and beliefs of Paliya tribes living in Kerala's Idukki area in India. In the hills of Peermedu and Udumpanchola talukas of the Idukki district, this tribe is found. Researchers have also noted the rites associated with females' puberty among the practices of these cultures. So when a female child enters puberty in this tribal society, she is customarily isolated. A separate cabin is used for isolation. All of the family members are then told, and the mother's brother's wife pays a visit to the woman the same day with presents like glass bangles and metal necklaces. No guy is permitted to visit her or come anywhere near the hut during this time. She is fed during this period by her mother or other women, and when she exits the hut, she is covered. Only females are permitted to spend the night with her, such as her older sister, her mother's brother's daughter, or her father's sister's daughter. The female group members carry her to the nearby stream on the bathing day. She dives into the stream seven times. After she receives water crafted from a certain kind of medicinal leaf. It is a beverage with medicinal properties. She is then given new clothing. Later, on her way home, the girl brings a metal or aluminum bowl that is filled with water. Following that, it is advised that she prepare rice in the pot. This group holds a ceremony in the late evening or early morning. The researcher also noted that there is a sink with betel nuts in front of the girl, and those who visit it place money in it. This is something in which their families are participating (Mathew, Mathew & Mathew, 2018).

Janaki Jayawardena points out in the research paper *Cultural Construction of the 'Sinhala Woman' and Women's Lives in Post-Independence Sri Lanka*, after a girl reaches puberty, the elders first look at the girl's horoscope. It is done to know about her future according to the time when she reaches puberty. The next step is to arrange the times and dates for the coming-of-age rituals. Accordingly, until ritual bathing is done, they are placed in a secluded place, and a man is not allowed to see them. After that, the girl is ritually bathed by a woman of another caste. After that, the girl is covered with a white cloth and brought home. Accordingly, the author has shown that after these rituals, the girl will see her face as a woman for the first time in a clay basin filled with clean water. After that, the girl will be dressed in new clothes and will receive the blessings of the elders, and the elders will give her gifts. Accordingly, the author points out that these rituals have social significance. In this

research paper, attention has also been paid to a matter called “Killa”¹ in Sakskruti. Thus, after a girl reaches puberty, her menstrual blood is considered impure, and she is not allowed to enter some sacred places and temples. It has also been shown that it is something that exists in different religions and cultures. After performing these rituals, some families hold parties at a high level, and some families do it very little. and some say that this should not be done in public. But some families throw fancy parties and celebrate very loudly (Jayawardena, 2022).

Krobo girls and Dipo puberty rites of passage in the eastern region of Ghana, facts have been presented about the rites of puberty among the Krobo people of Ghana in Africa. According to researchers Elizabeth Anorkor Abbey and Nadir A. Nasidi, the ritual called "Depo" has been pointed out as a coming-of-age ritual among the Krobo people.

During this Depo ritual, the adolescent girl is isolated and put through a series of counseling and teaching sessions. Adults give advice on becoming a future mother and wife. Also, bathing with herbs is one of the occasions in these rituals, after which blessings are received from the priests. Another unique aspect of the ceremony that includes these rituals is dressing the girl in a dress known as "Dip-Yo". It consists of beads and cloth. They believe that beads and cloth have spiritual significance. Also, the researcher has pointed out that a public ceremony is held where girls dress up and perform dances. But the researchers have pointed out that there are many opinions among the community about these rituals, and some rituals have been missed by the community at present (Abbey & Nasidi, 2023).

As shown by Silva, it has been shown that in the puberty rites, a girl child is expected to stand up as a woman in society and to think as a socially responsible member. She has been shown to ensure that she acquires a stable female identity of her own in the Sinhalese coming-of-age ritual that marks it. It is done through the advice of the elders, and it has been shown that she should maintain her purity until marriage, be ready to bear family responsibilities as a girl child, follow culture and ethics, and in the future fulfill the roles of a wife and a mother. Also, these counseling activities and rituals are performed by older women. Among those rituals, the ritual of bathing the female child is a special one, for which older women take the initiative. The researcher has shown through his study that there are various ideologies in the traditional village society according to how a coconut is broken upon entering the house after bathing the female child. Later, elders, including mothers and fathers, are greeted and treated with milk and sweets. Gold earrings, necklaces, and bangles are worn by the girl child, and she is given traditional jewelry by her grandmother (Silva, 1981). The research paper Puberty Period among Different Religions, Traditions, and

¹ “Killa” - Meaning of Killa is impurity. Killa is a type of negative energy created by certain microwaves This type of negative energy is born from dead bodies, feces and blood (Ranabahu, 2024). First Blood also include these characteristics. Thus Due to the entry of this blood germs of into the body, the physical and mental strength is weakened and easily susceptible to diseases.

Societies discuss the ideologies and ideas about puberty and menstruation among different religions, traditions, and societies. In many religions and traditions, women are considered impure during this period. According to Christian customs, a woman should live in her private home during this period and not participate in church activities. Also, a woman is not allowed to touch holy things such as the Bible during this period. A similar situation exists in Islam. And that time is considered impure. Again, it is stated that they should take a ritual bath to become clean. Also, it is stated that they should not touch the Holy Qur'an. After this bath, she can continue to pray and fast, while the Muslim Mosque and all holy shrines are allowed. In addition to this, the researcher has presented facts about Jewish rituals, rituals of the Sikh religion, Buddhist and Hindu rituals, etc. In general, it has been stated that it is not allowed to enter the religious shrines of many religions. Also, as the researcher has pointed out, there are more social prohibitions for this activity than other activities in society. In a social situation, there is a minimum value for this. Many children have health problems. It has also been pointed out that there is a lack of instructions. Still, in many social activities, a situation has not arisen for a girl child to talk about this period in society, and their level of awareness about this is also at a minimum level. The researcher points out that these girls should be made aware of these issues through formal education. It has been stated that children learn this through informal methods, and it should be formally made known to young children (Obaid, Kadim, Abdulrasol, Abbass & Hussein, 2022).

Through the research paper called *Life Cycle Rituals, Puberty Rituals*, the researcher Suzanne Hanchett has analyzed the rituals of coming of age during human life, and it has been shown in several countries in South Asia. Accordingly, he points out that there are many female puberty rituals in the southern parts of South Asia. There, the first menstruation or the coming of age of a female child is considered auspicious. That is, if there is no preparation of a female child for motherhood, it is also indicated as preparation of the body. There are some similarities between the coming-of-age rituals in this region and a few days of seclusion. After that ritual, bathing is done. After performing those rituals, contact with family members takes place. In South India, in this ritual, a bride is dressed up, and a necklace in the shape of a necklace is also worn during marriage. Also, in the upland Sinhala culture, coming-of-age rituals are performed, and a festival is also held. The researcher has shown that these rituals are performed by the people of the laundry caste. Also, while Bangladeshi Muslims celebrate women's rites of passage, Bengali Hindus elaborately perform puberty rites (Hanchett, 2021).

According to the research paper *restudy of "Kotahalu yagaya"*² at Anuradhapura District in Sri Lanka, as pointed out by Jayathilaka, Jayasiri, Mudalige and Devapura, one of the elements known as "*Kotahalu yagaya*" was in the rituals performed when a female child takes place here. There are many rituals that are performed after a girl reaches puberty, and the first one is to look at the girl's horoscope according to the time of puberty. If the girl has reached puberty at an inauspicious time, this *kotahalu yagaya* is performed. Sex education has also been given through this. But the researchers point out that such elements have been removed from the rituals

² *Kotahalu Yagaya – Flowering wedding*

performed when female children reach adulthood (Jayathilaka, Jayasiri, Mudalige, & Devapura, 2021).

When considering puberty from a biological perspective it is different from cultural aspects. From a biological perspective, puberty is the stage of physical maturation in which an individual becomes physiologically capable of sexual reproduction. The biological changes that occur during puberty include several neurosecretory factors and/or hormones, all of which modulate somatic growth, the development of the sex glands, and their endocrine as well as exocrine secretions. Physiologically, puberty is a short-term event (taking place over a few weeks) of the central nervous system, which reinitiates positive feedback within the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal (HPG) axis and promotes sexual maturation. Biological adolescence begins with puberty and lasts for 5–10 years. The physiological transition in the brain and hormonal system from juvenile to adolescent stages cannot be seen without sophisticated technology (Nathalie & Colich, 2020).

Puberty is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood, during which a growth spurt occurs, secondary sexual characteristics appear, fertility is achieved, and profound psychological changes take place. Although the sequence of pubertal changes is relatively predictable, their timing is extremely variable. The normal range of onset is ages 8 to 14 in females and ages 9 to 15 in males, with girls generally experiencing physiological growth characteristic of the onset of puberty two years before boys. Pubertal maturation is controlled largely by complex interactions among the brain, the pituitary gland, and the gonads, which in turn interact with the environment (Nathalie & Colich, 2020). Accordingly, considering puberty from a biological perspective, it is clear that it is a change in brain and hormonal activity.

For the most part, Sinhala and Hindu cultures share many similarities. Despite their differences in religion, language and many other aspects, they have evolved from the same root. In the case of rituals between cultures, there are different forms of rituals. Accordingly, this study will explore the following research questions. What are the similarities and differences of the flower rituals between these cultures? What meanings are presented in those rituals? How have those customs evolved? The following objectives should be emphasized in relation to these research problems: to search the evaluation process of such rituals within the cultures and to identify similarities and differences in between Sinhalese and Tamil puberty rituals.

2. Methodology and Materials

This study is based primarily on qualitative data with a focus on subjectivity as ontology and Epistemology would be the Interpretation paradigm. Since interpretive researchers believe that the outside world is made up of people's subjective views, they adopt an intersubjective epistemology and the ontological view that reality is socially created. Following the qualitative study This study underwent the phenomenology approach. The Phenomenology approach follows multiple individuals who experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). In 1989 Polkinghorne identified phenomenology study could follow interviews with 5 to 25 people. Accordingly, the total sample was determined as 20 women from

Kurunegala, Gampaha, Malabe, and Jaffna areas (10 Sinhalese and 10 Tamil women over 45 years of age) by following purposive sampling techniques. This allowed us to obtain information from women in these age groups about more traditional and ritualistic Puberty customs. In addition, since middle-aged women were used for the study, it allowed the researchers to get a clear sense of their experiences and how they have changed over time. Primary data were gathered using the in-depth interview method during two months in which this research was conducted, and information was obtained under participation observation by participating in such events in the area or among the nearest relatives during this period. As the primary objective of the research is to identify the similarities and dissimilarities of the puberty rituals between the Sinhala and Tamil cultures and to emphasize how they have evolved, the data analysis was the Content analysis technique which interprets the life experiences of the participants.

3. Results

3.1. Sinhala Cultural Belief on Puberty

In Sinhala Traditional Culture, The daughter's horoscope is examined by the parents after she reaches puberty. Following that, the date and auspicious hours for the rites are supplied in accordance with the girl's coming-of-age period. Clothes worn during puberty are safely disposed of. In some provinces, (Kurunegala) the fabric is given to an aunt. Some people bury the cloth. A dress of the daughter's choice is also added to the burial cloth. And also removed the gold ornaments she was wearing on that occasion. After reaching puberty, unsalted milk rice is cooked and fed to the daughter. In some provinces (Kurunegala) a dish is prepared and served with seven vegetables. Foods made of oil and meat and fish are not allowed to be eaten and some are given chilly gravy. Then she is taken to a room in the house and kept there until the day of auspicious bathing so that no one can see her, and the daughter is never left alone. Also, an iron or a nail will be tied around the waist to keep the daughter close. Only women are near her and men are not allowed to come there. Generally, staying in the room for more than 7 days is done and during that time, the face is not looked at with the mirror. Thus, after many days, girls look at their face in the mirror because the shape of their face before puberty and the shape of their face after puberty change.

On the auspicious day of bathing, the girl is bathed with medicated water, and on the bathing day, a milk branch is hung. After bathing, the girl is covered with a white cloth and brought inside the house. Upon entering the house, a coconut is broken. During the coconut-cracking ritual, the coconut is cracked by one of the daughter's uncles or the girl herself. Different opinions are also published depending on how the coconut is cracked. such as cracking the coconut without any mistakes indicates her future life would be successful and prosperous. Then place a lamp on a candy table, walk seven rounds around it, and clap your hands to extinguish the lamp. Finally, the girl can see her own face through the water basin. It is also known that whenever the young girl sees her own face through the water, her natural beauty will enhance and will keep with her throughout her life. The next custom is to take the blessing from parents and elders. At this time the girl is gifted and earrings are planted. Most of the time parents and relatives present gold or money to the girl. It also demonstrates the

prosperity in her life. According to Sinhalese village beliefs, girls are restricted from eating oily foods and meat for at least three months, even after puberty. The reason for that is that, according to Sinhala folklore, the girl may suffer from the *Evil Spirit*. So most of the time parents carefully choose the young girl's food.

“ When girls reach puberty, oily foods are not given to them. The process of puberty involves her belly being renewed. In that case, eating oil will cause her stomachache. Meanwhile, we believe that eating oil causes defects in Evil Spirit ” (Sinhala women, aged 47, Malabe).

In Sinhala tradition, it is believed that such evil spirits as *“Kalukumara Dosha³”* cause much trouble to the younger girls, Due to this reason she would be mentally ill or once she entered into the marriage life, she would not become a mother. So, Sinhala people thoroughly advise such girls to refrain from such behaviors and practices.

3.2. Tamil's Cultural Belief on Puberty

The celebration of the first menstruation is called – *“Saamarththiya veedu”/“Saamarththiya Sadangu”* in that particular area. At the time of first menstruation, that particular girl is seated on the coconut leaves and dry leaves near the well. The mother's brother are responsible for the initial rituals like breaking the coconut to start initially spiritually. Then mother's sister sprinkles water on the head, followed by cousins of that particular girl who have been poured water (Figure 3). Because the blood (first menstruation) should not be allowed to see anybody or not allowed to bathe alone. That's what the girl has situated on the leaves. After their mother and the elders give their blessings, the particular girl wears a new dress and is sent into a separate room with some traditional protective tools like neem and a *Saththaham⁴*. Thirty-one consecutive days are considered as *“Thudakku⁵”* – (Thudakku means on those days nobody wishes to have food at home and can't go temple in these days. it is specially called- *“Kannithudakku”*. Special foods for eating- Foods mixed with egg, neem juice, a variety of foods by using chickpea flour, coffee, string hopper, pepper, cumin, gingerly oil, etc.

³ *KALUKUMARA DOSHA - Is also known as Black Prince and he is a demon. A life member of the company of devils. Also known as Kalu Kumara Devatawa. According to mysticism, he has four hands. A sword is held in one hand, a chicken (black) in another hand, a baby's body in another hand, and so on in the remaining hand. The young girl may influence from the Black Prince.*

⁴ *Saththaham is a small knife which is made of iron only it has a long sharp handle and is used for cutting purposes generally. However, it is a very special tool in Tamil traditional occasions like Puberty ceremonies, Weddings, and housewarming. In Tamil ceremonies, it is used to provide safety with the lemon.*

⁵ *Thudakku means on those days nobody wishes to have food at home and can't go to the temple in these days. it is specially called- “Kannithudakku”. Special foods for eating- Foods mixed with egg, neem juice, a variety of foods by using chickpea flour, coffee, string hopper, pepper, cumin, gingerly oil, etc.*

During this time, that girl is not allowed to walk outside at nighttime, because elders believe if a sparrow puts poop on the head of the girl, it may create bad luck for her and the devil will climb on the girl. The second menstruation is also celebrated as equal to the first menstruation with three head showers for the girl. In addition to this, there is a big event called the “puberty ceremony” which is marked by the religious priest at an auspicious time and conducted by parents in a grand celebration manner. The relatives and neighbors are invited with traditional invitation methods.

During this ceremony, when the woman comes to the place of the event, the old woman hits the girl with neem leaves on the girl’s head and breaks the coconut father to start the event. Further, sweet foods have been thrown in all four directions, and “Arti” is performed by the elders with various foods and things like coconut, banana, and flowers. This ritual is performed to sanctify the girl and make proper circumstances to take the birth child after marriage without spiritual constraints. (in Tamil it is called “Thosam”⁶) This puberty ceremony celebrates to let the community know that there is a girl of marriageable age at home. If these rituals are not performed at the time of puberty, it is mandatory to conduct on the day of marriage. This practice also specific in this area.

In Jaffna Villages, The rituals at puberty have been followed for two purposes: Cultural purpose and Spiritual purpose. At the time of first menstruation (called Pooppadaithal in Tamil) should wear a lungi and blouse only brought by a person from the caste of Vannan (Vannan is a law-caste group who are traditionally occupied for washing dirty clothes of high caste people). When a girl gets her first menstruation, close relatives are invited on a particular day and the Aunt (wife of that particular girl’s mother’s brother’s wife) should bathe her. And cook red rice Pongal and eat together to celebrate. Further, that particular girl does not eat the food that she takes usually up to the end of menstruation. Only she takes traditional foods like red rice Pongal, chickpeas Pittu, gingelly oil, and egg for whole days. During whole days of menstruation, the girl could not go out of home even out of the room not necessarily. The whole day girl wears a lungi and blouse only. The important thing- the whole day the girl should have neem leaves for her hygienic protection. (Hindus believe neem protects us from unwanted things like evil eye, and ghosts) At this time the menstruated girl couldn’t wear a sanitary pad because of the traditional practice. (all the practices have been done by grandma if she is not, the mother will do). The worst thing is here that, dirty clothes should be worn by the particular Vannan. Those particular days are considered ‘Thudakku’ (it means the family members and close relatives who eat Pongal on that particular day, can not go to the temple and outsiders would not like to take food or coffee at her home until finishing her menstruation in terms of up to the religious rituals that have done by Hindu priest)

⁶ In Tamil it is called “Thosam” This puberty ceremony celebrates to let the community know that there is a girl of marriageable age at home. If these rituals are not performed at the time of puberty, it is mandatory to conduct them on the day of marriage. This practice is also specific to this area.

On the day of the celebration (after finishing menstruation) and religious rituals done by the priest, that is called the Puberty ceremony (in Tamil- Manchal Neeraaddu vizha) again girl bathes from her aunt, and wears half saree and gets blessings from her aunt, uncle, and parents and participated in the religious practices. This day is celebrated grandly as a big- celebration with relatives and friends. (almost 500 persons) with lunch and cultural events like musical programs, dance and drum, and Nataswaram.

Some rituals in this day: Aarti will take place importantly. (Arti or Arati is a Hindu ritual employed in worship, often part of a puja, in which light is ritually waved for the veneration of deities, beyond light Arti, there are some foods and goods like neem leaves, flowers, and food, coconut are used to the Arti. One old lady from the family is responsible to do Neem leaving Arti for the purpose of protecting the evil eye. Through these practices, traditional subordination against women and girls has been passed on for several centuries. Further, caste deviation and discrimination as well.

3.3. Auspicious Material and its Meaning

Within the rituals of puberty, both Sinhala and Hindu People use different kinds of materials. Mainly they are very near to the natural ingredients and materials. The idea or meaning of those materials can be identified in different ways. In Sinhala Culture Clay pot is the main item use to bathe young girl and to perform further customs. As an example Sinhalese use the clay pot is filled with water and jasmine flowers and it indicates Symbols of fertility and prosperity. This is used on an auspicious day. The other special material that use during the menstruation period is iron-made instruments such as nails, knives or sickles.

By keeping such an instrument with the girl in every time, Sinhalese believes that girl can protect herself from the evil spirit, and She will not be alone. Further Sinhalese use medicated water to bathe the girl, they include Venivel Gata, white sandalwood, Jasmin, and Wild Termaric. These ayurvedic ingredients enhance the natural beauty and fight against germs. In Sinhala Culture most of time Oil Lamp are used to perform rituals, the idea is to use such oil lamp is, it perform as a safety and health measure. it is believed that Coconut oil kills the germs. Whenever the rituals are undergoing Sinhalese use the coins for the rituals, it is A future without poverty and economic disturbances of the young girl.

Accordingly, there are various meanings of the sacrificial items used for the Puberty ritual and their use. Most of the time Traditional beliefs have focused on enhancing the safety and healthier life for the young girl.

3.4. Rituals and Hidden Meaning (At the beginning and end of the ceremony)

In the study of the Puberty rituals, the following similarities between the two cultures can be identified from the beginning to the end of the rituals.

According to Table 02, it is clear that traditional customs are being performed due to different reasons, such as safety measures, good health practices, and future

directions for young girls. The following specific customs can be identified among the Sinhala culture.

Table 01. Similar meanings of the two cultures

Meaning (In Sinhala Culture)	Ritual and Scientific Meaning	Meaning (In Tamil Culture)
<p>The mother is expected to provide the astrologer with information such as the time and place of the event, as well as the color of her daughter's dress at the time of the event, so that the astrologer may, in turn, provide her with a forecast of her daughter's future, and most importantly, the auspicious time for performing her pubertal bathing ritual, and what color she should wear immediately after this ritual.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Meet the Astrologer</p> <p><i>Astrologers traditionally give the prediction to human behavior based on their birthdate. Following that Both Sinhala and Tamil people are willing to follow astrological predictions based on the time of puberty. But there is no scientific approach for this practice.</i></p>	<p>To fix the puberty ceremony's date, time, and other auspicious times to do the rituals. further, get to know the color of dresses and about the things that have to be provided to the temple Pooasari.</p>
<p>It is believed that the reason for seclusion is to protect the girl against evil spirits particularly vulnerable to at this point in her life.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The girl is not staying alone</p> <p><i>This is done to reduce the stress that may occur due to hormonal changes in the body</i></p>	<p>The seclusion means that in those days the girl is treated as a non-touchable person. if someone touches her, they can't go to the temple or any other religious events for one month.</p>

<p>It is believed that giving meat and fried food will make it difficult to digest with the changes taking place in the body during this time. In addition to these foods are believed to attract evil spirits to her.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Dietary Restrictions</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Providing food that helps the body produce new hormones and digest function properly</i></p>	<p>It is believed that giving meat and fried food will make it difficult to digest with the changes taking place in the body during this time. Furthermore, specific foods that allow one to take this time have sufficient nutrition for losing blood.</p>
<p>A clay pot or <i>kalaya</i> is filled with water and jasmine flowers. This is poured over the girl seven times. It is believed that <i>Kili</i> is eradicated in this way. Some of the girls bathed with medicated water. It is symbolic of healthiness.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Bathing Rituals</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>This is done for the sake of health and personal hygiene</i></p>	<p>First bathing in the ceremony with milk and some kind of herbal grass. (In Tamil it is called 'Paal aruhu'). It is believed that girl will get into purity and be blessed by the elders in the family.</p>
<p>It is believed that <i>Kili</i> is eradicated in this way</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Not meet the gents</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Germs will likely be spread when meeting with outsiders. In many cases, Sinhala and Tamil people do not allow contact with outsiders when an infectious disease occurs</i></p>	<p>It is believed that <i>Kili</i> is eradicated in this way</p>
<p>It indicates good or bad omens regarding the girl's future.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Cut the coconut.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>No scientific perspective</i></p>	<p>This symbolizes the great and spiritual opening for the girl's future.</p>
<p>Symbolizing her passage into womanhood</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Gold And New Clothes</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Feeling adapted to a new lifestyle, environment, and society. It is also identified that wearing new clothes makes a healthier and cleaner life.</i></p>	<p>In Tamil tradition, every bride has to be provided dowry for her marriage. Therefore, it symbolizes the financial strength of the family to give a dowry to that particular girl for her marriage.</p>

<p>It is believed that the <i>flowering wedding</i> was held historically to announce to the community that there was a young woman of marriageable age in their midst</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Hold the auspicious ceremony inviting the relatives.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>This is done to adapt to the society</i></p>	<p>To be safe from evil and harness forces around the girl. And also getting the blessing from her ancients.</p>
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3.5. Differences of the rituals among the cultures

Separate Traditional customs can be identified between these two cultures. Mainly, those have connected with some rituals as well as several behaviors. In the Sinhala Culture on the auspicious day, there are several performances, and those are used to adhere to several traditional rituals.

On the auspicious day, the girl is made to exit the house from a back door for the bathe and after the bathe, she re-enters from the main front door. The hidden meaning of this practice symbolizes her new role as a woman. When she entered the home with a new appearance, it created a new aspiration for the home and its members, too. When the day of the girl's bathing arrives, it can be identified that the girl should cut a milky tree, and she should see the latex of that milky tree. Most of the time, Sinhala people use a jack or a rubber tree for this purpose. The hidden meaning is to provide good omens vis-à-vis her entry into womanhood, and her projected role as wife, and mother. Further, it also indicates the wealthy sight. But this kind of performance cannot be identified among the Tamil Culture. Further, it is also identified that after getting bathed Sinhala girls are smashing the clay pot. Following that Sinhalese believe that it eliminates all the negative and bad luck. It indicates that all such bad luck may vanish, and the girl can have the opportunity to enter a good and healthy life. These rituals are specific to the Sinhala culture but can not be identified with the Tamil cultural practices. Apart from that, some other separate rituals and practices can be identified within the Tamil culture. Mainly Tamil people believe that drinking more water during this period may create an enlarged stomach and may girl appear old. So girls are not allowed to have much water. Also Celebrate the puberty ceremony as a large event with relatives is another practice performed in Tamil Culture. Following that Hindus announce that the girl is ready for marriage and welcome suitable proposals in the future.

Figure 01, indicates the other differences that can be identified between the Sinhala and Tamil Cultures. Mainly there are certain beliefs among these two cultures but its appearance is different as example, both cultures believe that evil spirits are surrounding environment may impact if the rituals are not been practiced appropriately. In Sinhala Culture evil spirits like “*KALUKUMARA DOSHA*” may impact in such a situation. In Tamil Culture it is not similar with Sinhala culture, but they

believe in “KANNITHTHUDAKKU”, Which means that at the first menstruation, the girl is treated as a non-touchable person.

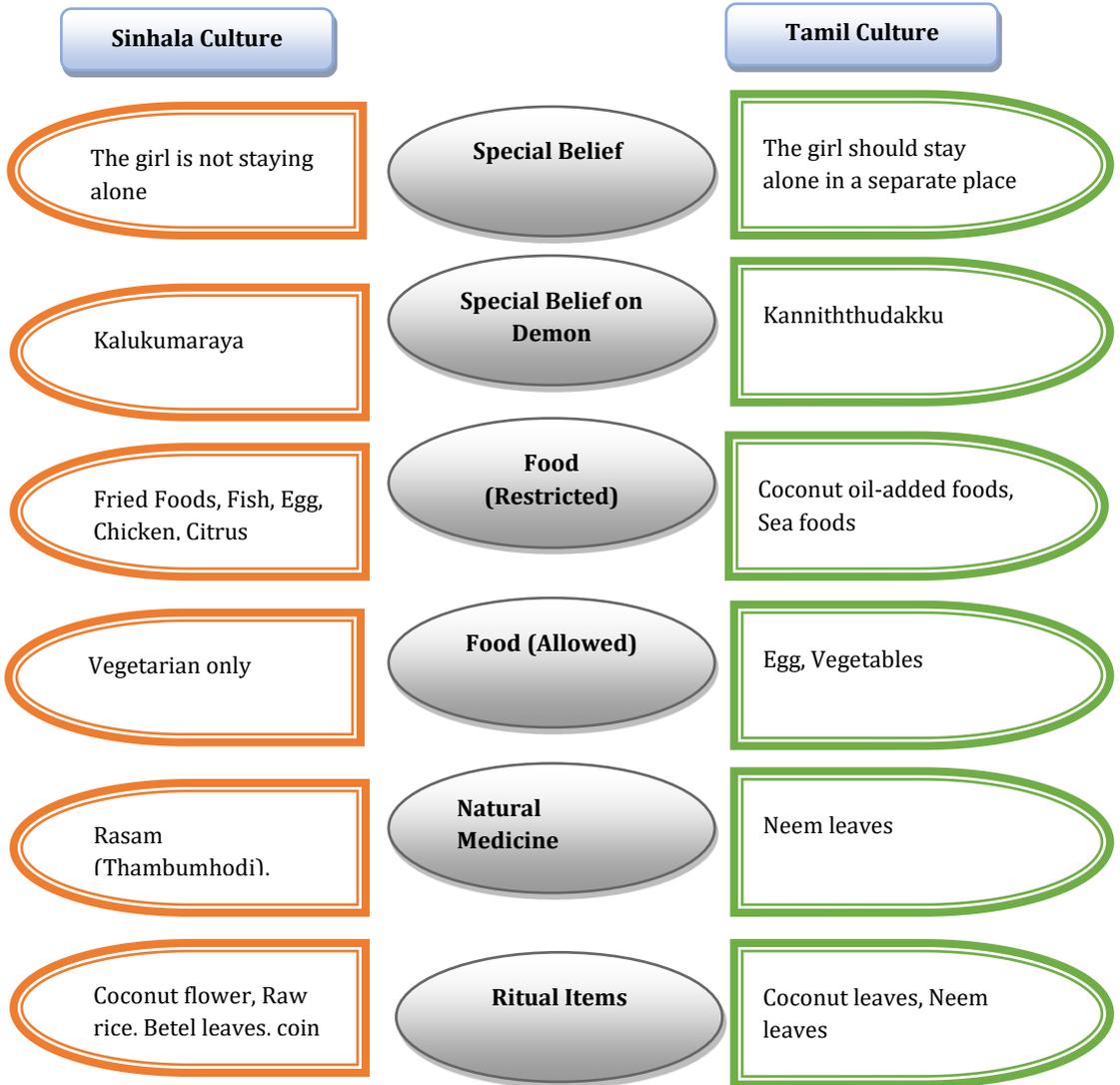


Figure 01. Puberty rituals among the cultures

⁷ It means at the first menstruation, the girl is treated as a non-touchable person, and at that time, she and her family are not allowed to go to the temple, and other religious occasions. Further, it is practiced for a minimum of fifteen days and comes to a finish with the special prayers done by Hindu gurus.

Even when the Sinhala Culture acceptances are not allowing to keep girls alone, in the Tamil Culture girls can stay alone. These practices have two different meanings. In Sinhala Culture, they believe that evil spirits may come when the girl be alone, while Tamil Culture accepts that being alone may be safe to the girl and another member of the family. When it comes to identifying the food restrictions among the culture, it is obvious that in the Sinhala culture such girls are not allowed to have fried food with meat. Sinhalese name them "PULUTU⁸", They believe eating such food makes stomach ache and the digestion system may get trouble while it makes a bad impact of the evil spirit. A similar identification can be illustrated among the Tamil culture but they restrict the seafood in such occurrences. There are several natural ingredients and medicines used in the menstruation period, in Tamil Culture they use Neem leaves as it enriches the medical value while in Sinhala culture to enrich the nutrition and digestion function, they use Rasam as a drink. All of them include medical herbs and other ingredients. As ritual items, both cultures follow natural materials to perform their customs. In Tamil culture, puberty rituals are performed to indicate that a girl is ready for marriage and suitable proposals are welcome. There are differences in beliefs and practices between Sinhala and Tamil cultures, but both believe that evil spirits surround us and may cause harm if rituals are not performed properly.

3.6. New Trends in Sinhala Culture

Modern Puberty rituals have undergone various changes in Sinhala culture. It also changes depending on local issues in each area, and new aspects can be identified. The occurrence of puberty in very young girls is becoming increasingly common in modern times. Here, it is also significant that the food pattern in general is a contributing factor.

"We know that girls become puberty fast when they consume poisoned food, especially like chicken. The majority of foods we eat come in this artificial flavor and are poisonous, and they are working on the bodies of our children as well." (Sinhala women, aged 55, Meegamuwa).

Based on those facts, it is obvious that puberty rituals are now performed at a younger age as well. Thus informal or formal security would not imposed as previously the aging limit of getting puberty was not clear within the parents. The other significant trends that can be identified within the puberty rituals are basically among the bathing rituals. At present the girl's mother is the most responsible person to do all the bathing rituals. at previously Redi Nanda (A washerwoman or laundress) did the all bathing rituals. But as a modern trend, all these rituals are being performed by mother or girl's anty.

⁸ PULUTU - Fried foods made by fish or meat

"In the old days, the cloth lady of the village bathed us. She had been given all our clothes, food, and even the two earrings that I was wearing that day. Otherwise, it would be the reason to gain bad evil threats." (Sinhala women, aged 35, Avissawella).

The rituals and beliefs associated with the foods have been dramatically changed in modern society. In the previous day, girls had a lot of food restrictions, but now mothers are always concerned about the nutrition of the girl, so there are no food restrictions.

3.7. New Trends in Tamil Culture

Because of the young generation's attitude due to modernization, they are not willing to do these rituals properly, and with heartfelt dedication. especially in the town areas most of the ceremonies are conducted in the ceremony halls, and there are very poor facilities to do all the rituals suitably.

"One of my colleagues said that her daughter does not like to do puberty ceremonies and relevant rituals because she feels some shame about revealing her first menstruation to society. when she asks about these rituals to her daughter, she starts to cry and avoids doing them. it is observed that nowadays there is a reducing trend observed in the town areas. however, many of the rural areas have practiced that kind of ritual perfectly" (Tamil women, aged 49, Jaffna).

Furthermore, in those days, at the first menstruation, tea was not allowed to drink. but nowadays new beverages like malted drinks are allowed to have. In some places, alcohol is also given to the girl for the first 7 days. Sanitary pads are also used during the first menstruation. In the ceremony, in Tamil Culture, it has a long tradition of cooking and providing vegetable meals only for visitors, very recently, it has been changed to non-vegetable foods. Modern puberty rituals in Sinhala culture have changed, and the age of puberty is becoming younger due to changes in food patterns. Bathing rituals are now performed by the girl's mother or aunt, whereas in the past, a washerwoman or laundress would do it. Food restrictions have also been relaxed due to concerns about the girl's nutrition. In Hindu culture, the young generation's attitude towards rituals has changed due to modernization, and ceremonies are now often held in ceremony halls with poor facilities. Some girls feel ashamed about revealing their first menstruation to society and avoid doing these rituals. However, in rural areas, these rituals are still practiced. In some places, alcohol is given to the girl during the first seven days. Sanitary pads are used during the first menstruation. Traditionally, only vegetable meals were provided to visitors, but that has recently changed to non-vegetable foods.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The following preliminary conclusions can be drawn from this study. The cultures associated with the Puberty ritual are based primarily on common beliefs and faiths. Especially in Sinhala and Tamil cultures, it can be concluded that the existing rituals of these two cultures are related to nature and the elements of nature. It is clear in both these cultures that most of the Puberty rituals are expected to be about

prosperity, health and safety. Especially in the food patterns, the function of the proper digestive system is expected in the Sinhala culture. This fact is also evident in the Tamil culture. Due that reason these restrictions have performed with the specific taboo such as girls are not allowing to eat food make with oil. Another unique situation among these cultures can be identified in the performance of rituals by the closest relatives of the family and it is clear that it shows a unique sociological role related to the family. Further It should be pointed out that there have been some changes here according to different castes, races, and religions, as well as according to the living areas. Although it is practically difficult to perform all the rituals performed in a rural area in an urban area, it is clear in this study that the most essential and common rituals are performed by the elderly women of the family. An example of this is that certain rituals performed by the *Redinenda*⁹ is performed by the girl's mother or another adult woman. It was explained here that the basic elements of the coming of puberty ceremony such as changing the daughter's clothes, setting the oil pot stove for the coming of puberty ceremony, bathing the daughter, taking her home and setting the dining table are done according to good omens. Also, it was clarified that there are different beliefs and understandings among the villagers for those rituals as well as for the materials used for those rituals. Horoscope was also a unique factor here. That is, according to the time of puberty, the prediction of the girl's character and future is also done according to the horoscope. In saying this, puberty can be decided whether it is auspicious or inauspicious for that girl. If inauspicious, the astrologer prescribes many rituals to be performed by the girl. A few days after the completion of all the rituals, a ceremony is held in the family and it varies from family to family. Some celebrate this better and some do it less. Since this is not a custom, it is not essential, and it is done based on the needs and attitudes of the elders of the family.

According to the study, it is clear that puberty is considered one of the important moments in the life of a girl in Sri Lankan society. Some say puberty can be seen as a woman's second birth. These puberty rituals were considered auspicious in the society then as well as in today's society and these customs are associated with the Sri Lankan culture. Because of that, it became clear that it is necessary to maintain the rituals in future societies as well, so that our culture will spread to the next generation.

According to these facts, it is clear that these Puberty rituals show very valuable social values in the Sinhala and Tamil cultures, and they have a long and unique history. All of them are performing to adhere the religious and cultural values. For example - Avoiding food such as fried meat or instant food makes a healthier life pattern. According to the scientific approach Foods like chicken contain unwanted hormones, which cause genetic mutations in the body. It may directly influence the reproductive system of the girl. Subsequently, although flowering wedding and puberty rituals play some rituals away from the scientific approach, they play a vital role in crime prevention. As an example in Sinhala society, they believe that staying alone outside (Bathing place - near a lake, well, or river) allows Kalukumara (Demon) to influence the young lady. Through the scientific approach, it can be identified

⁹ a lady who represents the lower cast and Those who plays the profession of washing the clothes of the upper social castes

believing Kalukumara Dosa is a sort of informal crime prevention strategy. When young girls are prohibited from staying outside, make their safety and avoid being victims of sexual crimes. Furthermore, wearing new clothes also makes a fresh and clean life which directs a healthy life. Finally, the realities hidden in the Puberty rituals are very important as well as essential to protect the intangible cultural heritage. Thus, scientific as well as healthy practices are more important even in modern lifestyle, and informal social control methods make the availability of the afterlife rather formal social control.

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