Adolescence is the stage of life span that represents a transition period between childhood and adulthood. Chronological, it begins at the age 12 years and extends through age 18. The developmental event of puberty which usually occurs at the beginning of adolescence, signals the end of childhood; as at this time individuals become sexually mature and capable of reproduction (Bigner, 1998). According to Nightingale Nursing Time of India (2010), the adolescents represent about a fifth of India’s population, that is, 22% of its population.

1.1 Menarche and Menstruation

Girls attain menarche, the first menstrual period anytime between 9 to 14 years (Jamadar, 2012). Menarche is one of the most memorable and defining moment for adolescent girls. It is a meaningful, dramatic, and concrete event which marks puberty. Unlike pubic hair growth and breast development, which are prolonged pubertal changes, menarche is unique in that, its onset is abrupt. As the most distinct event of female puberty, menarche is a sign of physical maturity and fertility (White, 2008). Menarche and menstruation is an issue that every girl and woman has to deal with once she enters adolescence around the average age of 12, until she reaches the menopause somewhere in her 40’s (UNICEF India, 2008). Menstruation is not a rare or even unusual experience; however, in many cultures it is a private and largely hidden one. Menstruation was literally unmentionable because there are no words in the man-made language which could be used to describe the experience politely. Similarly, Lovering (1995) has found that adolescents have nothing to say about menstruation itself. The only discourse which they can use to describe their experience is medical one which describes pain, distress and untidiness. Unless these girls have period pain, or difficulties obtaining sanitary towel, they have nothing to say (Walker, 1997). There is an unspoken “culture of silence” with regard to their menstruation (Jamadar, 2012). It is also considered taboo to discuss menstruation, particularly for girls to discuss it with members of the opposite sex (Kissling, 1996; Williams, 1983). Because of social pressure, the menstruating girl is required to maintain the taboos placed upon communication about her experience (Kissling, 1997). Nevertheless, girls have questions and concerns regarding their own menstruation, and find the need to discuss
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this topic with friends. The social prohibition upon discussion of menstruation with others often causes parents to avoid discussing menstruation with their daughters, leaving the girls feeling unprepared for menarche (Kissling, 1996).

Girls who are aware of how to deal with menstruation tend to cope with it much better than those who are caught unaware. Preparedness gives girls the power to handle it in a mature way and also feel confident that there would be no embarrassment resulting from these intensely private moments. The setting of menarche is often celebrated in many cultures and during this period there is a tradition of preparing and giving food rich in iron and protein content. Modernization has seen the cessation of this practice of celebration to a certain extent but many households still follow the practice of providing the nutritional supplementation during menarche (Jamadar, 2012).

1.2 Cross-Cultural Perspective on Menarche and Menstruation

Taboo is something prohibited, forbidden or restricted, something not allowed by a culture. Taboo is a vehement (violent) prohibition of an action based on the belief that such behaviour is either too sacred or too accursed for ordinary individuals to undertake, under threat of supernatural punishment. Such prohibitions are enforced virtually in all societies. The word has been somewhat expanded in the social sciences, as a strong prohibitions relating to any area of human activity or custom that is sacred or forbidden based on moral judgment and religious beliefs. Breaking a taboo is usually not allowed in a society because it is a subset of culture. Something considered taboo is naughty, something society considers a no (www.dictionary.com, 2016). Taboos are perpetuated through folk tales that surround a young woman's period and traverse cross cultural, racial, ethnic and historical boundaries. Hence, the ‘curse’ is therefore a taboo that presents menstruating women as ‘filthy, sick, unbalanced, and ritually impure’ thus, excluding them from the supposedly ‘clean’ members of society (UNICEF, 2008). The history of menstruation reveals that women’s periods have, since primitive times, been considered taboo in many cultures. The Latin word for ‘menstruation’ was ‘sacer’, meaning ‘both pure and impure’ (Walker, 1983). The Romans called a menstruating woman sacra, sacred and accursed (Delaney et al., 1988). Words used in other early cultures to describe menstruation and menstruating women carried such meanings as
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supernatural, mysterious, incomprehensible, spirit, deity, and holy (Walker, 1983). The meaning of these words indicate the reverence (respect, worship) and fear primitive man associated with menstrual blood and with the unknown forces that caused the blood to flow. It has been inferred that the fear of menstrual blood held by early cultures resulted in an evolution that led to the alienation and tabooed state of the menstrual woman. In fact, the word “taboo” is believed to originate from the Polynesian word “tupua” which means menstruation (Walker, 1983; Delaney et al., 1988; Golub, 1992).

Psychoanalysts Thompson and Deutsch were among the first to focus on menarche as a key milestone in girls development. Thompson (1942) maintained that menarche is a traumatic event during which girls experience a loss of freedom, power, and spontaneity and that there is a cultural denial of menarche and menstruation which manifests itself in the decrease in girl’s self-esteem. Deutsch (1944) believed that girl’s psychological reactions to menarche have a common root to anxiety in which the approaching adulthood and sexuality are experienced as a threatening danger (White, 2008).

In Nepal, when a girl begins Menarche (menstruation for the first time) she is separated from her community and is not allowed to see light. Girls are secluded in a darkened section of the house and are not allowed to go outdoors on a dark night. At the end of her bleeding, she re-emerges and is taken around and shown the earth, water, flowers, and friends, as if seeing them for the first time (Devkota, 2011). When menarche begins in a Navajo girl, a special four-day ceremony takes place; this ceremony is called kinaaldá. During the ceremony, girl’s hair is washed with suds made from the Yucca plant. After the hair washing, it is tied back and moulded several times. The girl’s mother stands her upright and passes her hands over the girl in motion like moulding clay, but she does not actually touch the girl’s body. The girl’s hair is taken and pulled straight. Navajos believe that this makes the girl attractive and thin (Smith, 2006). Some American Indian cultures mark the menarche with an elaborate celebration, such as the Apache Sunrise Dance. For these tribes, the menarche seats the girl in an empowered state in which she can influence the well-being of others (Nelson, 2010).
Stigmatizing Menstruation and Menstruating Females
(Source: Plan International Australia)
Illustration no. 1
In Malekula, an island of the New Hebrides, a woman in a menstruating state are not allowed to enter in garden where young plants are growing. Menstruating women belonging to the Kaulong tribe of New Britain are restricted from going to the forest. They should be careful to stay away from gardens, residence and water sources. While most cultures treat menstruation as a curse, some see it as a blessing (Robb, 2011). The Kolosh Indians of Alaska lock away newly menstruating girls in tiny huts for one year, during which time they were allowed no fire, exercise, or company (White, 2008).

From the perspective of menstruation as a curse, menstrual huts are seen as evidence that women in these societies are considered to be dangerous and ‘untouchable’ during menstruation (Hardening, 1989). In primitive times menstrual blood was considered highly powerful and potent (Joseph, 2014). In many rituals menstrual blood was used especially for making magic potions. Even today, anything that is red in colour used in ceremonies is apparently indicative of the ancient ritual of using menstrual blood. But there are many societies which also attribute positive magical properties to menstrual blood. During menstruation women were considered to be having special powers. The reason could be because that predatory animal smelling the blood could come for the kill. As a result these women were kept in separate huts to protect the community (Joseph, 2014). Menstrual blood was used to ward off evil spirits and cure a variety of ailments including epilepsy, warts, leprosy, worms, and various gastrointestinal ailments (Delaney et al., 1988). The Aztecs used the menstrual blood of virgins as a special offering to their gods, particularly when they felt they had invoked the gods anger (Schuman, 2001). In medieval Europe, the first napkin or rag worn by a virgin was saved because it was believed that it could cure the plague (Lindahl et al, 2002).

However, apart from these positive perceptions majority of societal and cultural view of menstrual blood remained negative. In his encyclopaedia Natural History, Pliny (1989), the ancient Roman author and naturalist, recorded these damaging beliefs of menstrual blood: seed in gardens are dried up, the fruit of trees falls off, the edge of steel and the gleam of ivory are dulled, hives of bees die, even bronze and iron are at once seized by rust, and a horrible smell fills the air; to taste it drives dogs mad and
Infects their bites with an incurable poison. Even the ant is said to be sensitive to it and throws away grains of corn that taste of it and does not touch them again. The woman was believed to be capable of destroying entire crops and wilting plants if she walked by them (UNICEF, 2008).

According to Merskin (1999), history of taboos and beliefs against menstruating women were also seen in Western Europe. In Pre-modern Europe, a woman in her monthly cycle was seen as capable of causing ‘meat to go bad, wine to turn sour, and bread dough to fall’ (Thuren, 1994). The mythological belief that menstrual blood is unclean and toxic can be traced to the writings of the early Greeks and Romans (Allen & Fortino, 1983; Delaney et al., 1988; Knight, 1991) as well as to several other cultures where menstruating women were excluded. Such as, in Persia, menstruating girls or women were thought to be possessed by a devil. In the Roman natural history books, myths are abound with the potential of menstruating women turning wine sour, causing seeds to be sterile, withering grafts, causing garden plants to become parched and fruit to fall from a tree if she as much as sat under the plants (Mahone, 1988). In Uganda, menstruating girls and women are not allowed to drink cow’s milk, as it is believed that menstruation would affect the production of milk from the cows to get bloody milk. In the U.S., and in parts of Europe, some believe that menstruating women should not bake bread, as it will not rise (Ten, 2007). In Bangladesh, menstrual blood is seen as ‘the greatest of all pollution,’ and women are not allowed to prepare food or even go near the rice fields. In Western Nepal, women’s status is lower than a dog’s, because she is menstruating. During periods she can’t enter her house or eat anything but boiled rice. Some cultures, such as the Mae Enga of New Guinea and the Maori of New Zealand, believe that contact with menstrual blood or a menstruating woman can kill a man, thus resulting in a slow and painful death for the man (Meggitt, 1964). Others, like the Tinne Indians of the Yukon Territory, believe that the fundamental essence of femaleness resides in menstrual blood and, therefore, contact with a menstruating woman would threaten a man’s virility (Webster, 1942). Thus, women were secluded from their tribes or villages and confined to huts for the duration of the menses (White, 2008). In Ethiopia, menstruating women have to isolate themselves in menstruation huts because it is believed that menstrual blood pollutes the home. It is also felt that menstruation
should be a private thing, and only the woman should know about it. In rural Nigeria, men and women sometimes maintain separate quarters when a woman is on her cycle.

For fear that they are vulnerable to witchcraft attacks, some women worry about how to dispose off their pads or old cloths, leading them to not getting washed. In Burkina Faso, sanitary protection materials are carefully hidden for fear that other women may use them in black magic to cause infertility (SOS Children’s Village, 2014). In Afghanistan menstruating girls and women are also prevented from sleeping next to other family members. In Bolivia, because girls view menstrual blood as an extension of themselves, this influences the way in which they dispose off their sanitary materials. Simply burying used menstrual pads, which is unhygienic, is viewed as acceptable whilst incineration is not. In rural Kenya women on their periods are not even considered fit to go into a goats den or walk near livestock, and are not allowed to eat their meat or drink their milk (SOS Children’s Village, 2014). Among the more extreme practice the Indians of British Columbia, a menarcheal girl is forced to live alone in the wilderness where she remains secluded from her tribe and has to fend for herself for several years (Benedict, 1994). Natives of New Ireland, a large island in Papua New Guinea, kept their girls at home for the same period of time, but in cages, where they would get fat and pale, in accordance with the tribes standards of beauty (White, 2008).

Thus, throughout history and into modern times, women have been told that their biology, particularly menstruation, made them physically, emotionally, and mentally incapable of furthering their education, having a place in national affairs, and competing with men in the male-dominated professions. They have been taught that menstruation is an outward sign of inferiority and a naturally occurring deformity (Delaney et al., 1988).

1.3 Indian Practices Related To Menarche and Menstruation

There is a wide range of significance attached to menarche. The attitudes of societies toward menarche vary from delight and pride to fear and shame (Jamadar, 2012). Many anthropological accounts describe societies in which women withdraw
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during menstruation to special menstrual huts and lodges, which may also be used during bleeding after child birth (Walker, 2008).

The starting of menstruation is often met with a variety of reactions. In the Indian cultural context, attainment of menarche by girls is considered a biological indicator that the girl is ready for the commencement of sexual relations. This is evident from the traditional practice of “Gauna” that was commonly followed in the olden days. In this system the girls used to be married off at an early age but continued staying in the parental home without consummation of marriage. However, when a girl attained menarche the ceremony of Gauna would be performed and then the girl went to live at her husband’s house where she would begin her married life (Jamadar, 2012). Among the Vaishnava Bauls of Bengal, menstrual blood is thought to have potent energizing properties. Traditional songs lyrically refer to it as a river that rises once a month (Robb, 2011). In some places of lower Assam, in Pathsala, when the girl attains her menarche she is not given anything to eat nor she is allowed to see male members of the family till fourth day and on the fourth day she is given the ritual bath, like a bride. She is then married to a banana tree as custom goes, with great feasting and enjoyment (Devika, 2014).

Different cultures have varied beliefs and myths related to menstruation. Some reach a level of especially labelling it as “the curse,” “on the rag,” “weeping womb,” “bloody scourge,” “the red plague,” “under the weather,” and “being unwell” (Costos et al, 2002). Menstruation also has a long history of strict cultural taboos across India, which causes real harm. In some tribes women are forced to live in a cowshed throughout their periods. There are health issues, like infections caused by using dirty rags, and horror stories related to it (George, 2012).

Our cultural taboos also include avoiding sour foods for fear of a smelly period, not touching certain food items to prevent contamination and the general belief that menstruation dispels contaminated/toxic blood. There is also the belief that the body is ridding itself of hot “negative energy” and warm baths can be harmful to the body and/or the environment (UNICEF India, 2008).
In the Lohra tribe of **Jharkhand**, it is an age-old belief that mothers do not communicate about menses to their daughters (Global Hunt Foundation, 2014). In **Kayastha** (cast/ethnic group of India) families, it is believed that touching homemade vinegar or ghee during menstruation turns it bad. In Marwari (Indo-Aryan in **Rajasthan**) families, a menstruating girl does not attend guests or serve food because the girl is considered unholy or impure. Menstruating women are prohibited from entering kitchen and storeroom or sitting on the bed or sofa. Even, touching of new grocery items of the kitchen is prohibited. Girls also reported tying a black thread on their feet (just as an anklet) to ease pain. In Bhargav Brahmins (**Northern India**), girls having menstruation do not touch iron-made things like lock and keys, and so on. It is also believed that the girls should not touch the iron-made handle of door and window. In earlier times, girls’ during menstruation used to eat in separate utensils. In **Sarna** (religion), tribe of Jharkhand girls do not participate in plantation work, touching or watering plants during menses. **Oraon** tribe another tribe of Jharkhand, believes that when a girl attains menarche and if her mother tears a piece of cloth in three equal parts in one breath and gives that piece of cloth to the girl to use it during menses, it reduces the abdominal pain. In **Harijan** (the lowest class under Hinduism) families, there is belief that if menstruating woman touched water jug, it will develop a hole in it. It is also believed that if a girl who has attained menarche mops the floor in circular motion, 212 times it will lessen her abdominal pain. In **Vaishya** (one of the class under Hinduism) family, when the girl attains menarche, she has to cut a piece of thread of her height, which her mother throws on the roof. It is believed that this decreases the length of menstruation (from 5 days to 3 days). In Muslim families, each time the girl goes to toilet during menstruation, she has to wash her hand with mud then only she becomes “‘paak’” (pure) (Kumar and Srivastava, 2011). In all these cultures, once the period of seclusion was complete, the girl emerged a woman and was ready for marriage (White, 2008). Older women often considered themself ‘wise’, but were mostly illiterate or uneducated, and may recount and reinforce myths and beliefs that are biologically wrong. Discriminatory gender roles worsen women’s difficulties during menstruation. The extent to which schoolgirls are constrained and restricted is determined by tribal and family ideologies (Crofts, 2012).
In the cross cultural studies of many ethnic groups, menstruation, and everything associated with it, has been seen as simply negative. Menstrual blood and menstruating women have been identified as being dangerous, poisonous, and polluting. Menstrual women were believed to contaminate whatever they came in contact with: horses, food, hunting gear, weapons, canoes, water, and in particular the wealth and spiritual items of men. They were believed to spoil men's "luck" in hunting and gambling (Buckley 1982). These are some of the customs that has made menstruation unwelcomed among the adolescent girls. Most of these practices actually revolve around the question of a girl being pure or impure during menstruation. These taboos, which are still prevalent, are not only threats but are also serious considerations for the professionals in the health sector (Kumar and Srivastava, 2011).

1.4 Religious Interpretation of Menstruation

In connection with religious functions, menstruating women in many cultures are banned from shrines, religious ceremonies, and they are not allowed to handle or touch religious objects or personalities. For instance, in African traditional religion, among the rules to be observed by trainee priestesses is one which stipulates that she should voluntarily absent herself from the shrine for seven days each month during her menstrual period for fear that menstrual blood is dangerously harmful to sacred objects (Shuttle & Redgrove, 2005; Weideger, 1976).

Similarly in India, the two foremost religions -Hinduism and Islam - are the origin of many of these societal customs and taboos. In Islam the entire duration of menstruation, a woman is considered ritually impure. Menstruating women are not supposed to perform certain forms of prayers, such as the five daily prayers (Nemaz), fasting during the month of Ramadan (she fasts for an equivalent number of days later) or sitting in a mosque. She is also not allowed to touch the Quran or engage in sexual intercourse. After the complication of her period she has to take a ritual bath then she can resume her religious obligations. This process can include the wearing of a musk/perfume (House et al, 2012). In the strictest of Hindu families women who have their menses are kept separate from their household, not allowed to perform domestic duties, restricted from touching anything communal for fear of contamination, not
allowed to go to temple or perform *pooja* (prayer), must sit in separate areas during religious festivals/weddings and sprinkle *tulsi* water or cow urine in the house after they bathe to “make it pure again” (Pednekar, 2010). Adolescent girls from rural areas consider menstruation as a sin or curse from God (Dasgupta & Sarkar, 2008).

In **Shinto worship**, Japan’s indigenous religion, the unclean menstruating woman must not even pray near the Miya (a Shinto holy shrine), much less make offerings or touch the sacred and divine vessels (Smith, 1991). Another example lies in the **ancient Mayan culture** where women were excluded from all ceremonial worship for fear that their blood-related impurities would invoke the anger of the gods who would in turn punish the Mayans with disease and famine (Schuman, 2001). In addition to exclusion from religious practices, many societies and religions require menstruating women to undergo certain cleansing and purification practices. One of the most popular examples of these purification practices is found in the **Orthodox Jewish tradition** where menstruating women take part in the Mikvah, an ancient ritual bath. The menstruating Jewish woman is expected to abstain from sex during the time of bleeding and for the 7-day period subsequent to bleeding (Delaney et al., 1988). After which a woman has to undergo a ritual bath or ‘Mikvah’ (House et al., 2012). It is only after this ritual that the Jewish woman is considered pure and cleansed enough to resume relations with her spouse until her next menstrual period (White, 2008). Today, this tends to be practised only by the most religious (House et al., 2012). Women have learned that menstruation is dangerous and unclean, and that it carries a social stigma of shame (Guterman et al, 2007).

Buddhism viewed menstruation as “a natural physical excretion, that women have to face every month, nothing more or less” (Buddha Dharma Education Association, 2004). Buddhists of Taiwan characterized menstruating women as polluted, and restricted them with taboos. Women were taught that their menstrual periods were a hazardous vulnerability. Menstrual blood, itself, was viewed as “dirt” or “poison” (Furth & Shu-Yueh, 1992). Buddhism, in Japanese particular, has been characterized by a persistent anti-feministic attitude (Jnanavira, 2006). Some common restrictions include women being forbidden from participating in folk rituals, and that they must stay away
from temples. Meditation is not allowed for Menstruating women (though some women do, as they feel particularly “connected”), nor can they have contact with priests. They cannot take part in ceremonies, like weddings, either (Furth & Shu-Yueh, 1992). According to Buddhist there is a belief that ghosts eat blood; a menstruating woman, then, is thought to attract devils, and is therefore a threat to herself and others (Lhamo, 2003). Russian Orthodox Christians believe in menstrual taboos as well and do not attend church services and cannot have any contact with men, and may not touch raw or fresh food (Morrow, 2002).

Restrictions Encountered by Girls during Menstruation in Afghanistan, India, Iran & Nepal.
(Source: House et al, 2012)

Fig: 1

*Socio-Cultural Constructs Related to Menarche and Menstruation among Tribal Adolescents of Kargil District*
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Myths and misinformation regarding menarche and menstruation are very common among different religions. These religious and cultural myths sometimes become part of female’s lives and despite being socially constructed are communicated to the girls around puberty stage (Moore, 1995). An example is the belief that menstrual blood is ‘dirty’ (Schooler et al, 2005) not putting into consideration other virginal discharges that may not be menstruation. Such attitudes reinforce shame and embarrassments thus, have a negative effect on girls’ self-esteem (Rembeck et al, 2006). Many communities world over have gone through centuries of myths and taboos that have created an ideology of the female body which has continued to impact the lives of women and girls in modern society. Religious teachings, traditional practices and cultural beliefs, have all played their role in the ideology of stigmatising the menstruating woman. Sadly such myths have led to 48% of girls in Iran, 10% in India, and 7% in Afghanistan believing that menstruation is a disease, it is the removal of bad blood from the body, rather than a natural and healthy part of adolescence or young adulthood (SOS Children’s Village, 2014).

1.5 Justification for the Study

Twenty-five percent of the population of India are adolescents (UNICEF, 2011). Menstruation is a normal physiological process but still it is a unique phenomenon for every adolescent girl (Maria, 2010). Menstruation is generally considered as impure in the Indian society. Seclusion of the menstruating girls and restrictions being imposed on them within the family, have reinforced a negative attitude towards this phenomenon (Dhingra and Kumar, 2009; Singh, 2006). Religious and cultural customs sometimes become part of female’s lives and despite being socially constructed are conveyed to the young girls at puberty stage (Moore, 1995). There is a significant lacuna in the knowledge among adolescent girls about menstruation. Several research studies have revealed this gap and have shown low level of awareness about menstruation among the girls when they first experience it (Ahuja and Tiwari, 1995). Social prohibitions and negative attitude of parents towards the issue openly have blocked the access of adolescent girls to correct information, especially in the rural, remote and tribal communities (Mundey et al, 2010). Bolognini et al (1996) reported that in some cases,
parents forget their responsibility to transfer health information to their children due to either embarrassment or ignorance or life commitments. In other causes, the mothers and grandmothers may not be equipped to transact reproductive health knowledge due to illiteracy and poverty. In such situation girls cope, alone, with menarche and menstruation in practical yet in hazardous ways. Their physical, psychological, and social health is at risk and they are left vulnerable to reproductive tract infections. This situation is more worsened among the rural and tribal communities where access to information is more limited (Dasgupta and Sarkar, 2008). When menstrual information is inaccurate and inadequate it affects women’s ability to understand their own reality. Adolescent girls need to acquire right information about pubertal reproductive issues at right age in order to develop responsible behaviour towards reproductive process, especially in tribal rural areas like Kargil, where education and source of information is very poor. It is in this context that the present study assumes importance. In spite of the changing social and cultural norms and practices, the girls and women especially in these settings continue to have limited access to health care facilities. Kargil is a geographically isolated and one of remotest district of not only of Jammu and Kashmir State but also of India as a whole. The traditional way of life and cultural system of Kargil is unique in more than one way. To a larger extent this area is still untouched by other cultures and has continued to preserve its cultural uniqueness.

The present study explores the socio cultural beliefs, myths, taboos and restrictions related to adolescent menarche and menstruation prevalent among the Purig and Balti tribal population. Though some literature is available on the socio-cultural features of the local tribes, yet the existing literature has not made any analysis on the socio-cultural construction of menarche and menstruation in the selected community. This study hence attempts to address this gap and is one of the first studies to explore socio cultural constructs related to adolescent menstruation in the region. How menarche and menstruation are visualised in the given tribal community has been explored. The customs, traditions, taboos associated with this crucial symbol of reproductive maturity have been decoded through the present research. The study also generates baseline data on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of tribal females of Kargil region related to menstruation. Another uniqueness of the study is that it takes into account view points of
females of different age groups to understand the intergenerational continuity or transition in menstrual knowledge, attitudes and practices. Studies of such nature are again very rare in our Indian society. Data generated has provided an insight into the intergenerational variation in menstrual views and can also be useful for health care providers and educators for improving ways in which information about menstruation is addressed and disseminated. The findings are useful in the development of programs targeted to specific groups to educate and empower adolescent girls about menstruation and their health. Lastly, the results also have implications for the local policy makers, civil society, service providers, organizations, community, schools and families involved with adolescent health and women and to plan concentrated programmes and policies for the target group.

1.6. Objectives of the Study

The study has been carried out with the following objectives:

1. To study and document in the tribal setting the socio cultural beliefs/myths; taboos/restrictions related to menarche and adolescent menstruation

2. To study the adolescent girls perception about the socio cultural constructs of menarche and menstruation and their adaptability to it.

3. To assess the intergenerational continuity and transition in the menstrual knowledge, attitude and practices of sample tribal females
1.7 **Research Questions:**

The research questions framed for the study are:

- In the specific tribal setting how is menarche and adolescent girls’ menstruation conceptualized?

- What are the traditional socio cultural beliefs/ myths; taboos/ restrictions associated with unmarried adolescent girls’ menarche and menstruation?

- How are the specific socio cultural constructs of menarche and menstruation perceived by the sample tribal adolescent girls?

- How have the adolescent girls adapted to these socio cultural components and have moulded these or have ever resisted these?

- What are the existing practices of the adolescent girls related to menstruation such as those associated with their health and hygiene, diet, and daily activities?

- What is the level of knowledge and attitude of the tribal females towards menstruation?

- Is there any transition in how menstruation is perceived and experienced across generation (i.e., from grandmother to mothers to adolescent girls)