

## What is what!

A year our dear, own man the minister of foreign affairs-Sam Kutesa was appointed as the president of UN General Assembly. Boy I tell you, everyone I could think of was so proud. Once again our flag was blowing so high. Which Uganda really needed that time after a series of PR catastrophe?

There was much that was expected of him. And in all those this bribe thing or should I say "donation" as he likes to state it was nowhere in the picture. To be honestly there were some skeptics like Hon Muhammd Nsereko but as a nation we chose not to hear as we were all carried away by the good news.

What I planned to say here is not about what the guy did or how bad it is. But to clarify, what, what is what! Let's start by knowing what a bribe is. A bribe is simply a sum of money or something valuable that you give or offer to somebody to persuade them to help you.

Its money or anything valuable, for this case its money. Now one would wander. Why is everyone on this guy saying he got greedy, yet even the money he received was just a donation. The answer is simple, a donation it's self can be a bribe. It doesn't matter what he did with it. It might be that he fed a thousand starving refugees, built boreholes for government forsaken communities or his having a village of kids his sponsoring through school. All that matters not since he took money he shouldn't have taken, he still gets to be found guilty. Let this be a lesson to take home, more so for those in sensitive offices such as government ones. It might be the case that it was a donation without strings. But always and always people will find you at fault.

So as you've enjoyed reading this piece and as well taking something home, I encourage you to continue reading the rest of our stories and also share this magazine with friends and families. You can as well visit our social media platforms and give as a like or a follow that is, theBloggersmaglon twitter and theBlogger's Magazine on facebook .



theBlogger's  
magazine

# NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

the pitfall of archiving your goals.

Every January the gym fills up with people, by March most of them are gone. What happened to those people who were set on a new lifestyle, and ready to reach their goals? Waiting is what happened. Often times I've heard people utter the words 'I'll wait until the new years', with this they're referencing the goals they will set, but setting a goal to set a goal really won't do much. If you weren't motivated then, that burst of motivation you get in January probably won't be long-lasting or get you far.

The problem with waiting until new years eve rolls around have been just that, you're procrastinating, and procrastination is almost never a good start. If you really want to do something, like breaking a bad habit or forming a new one start now. By starting now, you are telling yourself that it's worth it, and not something you can procrastinate.

By the time new years eve rolls around you'll already have made good progress in reaching your goals.

I do, however, see the appeal of waiting 'new year – new me' and all that. It's a fresh start, but to me that seems like a depressing outlook on life, to only have an annual chance at renewal, and a fresh start only once a year isn't exactly motivating. I say every day is a chance at renewal and every day is a fresh start, positivity will get you far on your journey to a better you, so why not start now?

Kate

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I have been employed and unemployed in my journey as a job seeker several times. It's been a few years since the first time I dealt with employment as well as unemployment. To keep things a little uncomplicated, I'll only share *the story of my first encounter with unemployment* in this blog post.

## A True Story: My first encounter with unemployment!



Unemployment is one of the most baffling issue that contributes to high rates of depression and anxiety among all job seekers. Fortunately, I wasn't prepared to react with relevant mental state in my first time *experience with unemployment*. Soon, I would learn my lessons.

It's the 'well put together look' outside, to 'put together all the excitement' inside!

The first time I was out and about searching for a suitable job, my enthusiasm knew no bounds. I was a **bundle of positivity** and took each interview as a great learning experience. And I have had a lot of such learning experiences. Some of them were pleasant where I came across decent people doing their jobs. But there were a few that I would neither call a pleasant experience nor with decent people.

Don't you think, rejecting a potential candidate for the job is enough of a pain and the employer need not add insult to injury by harsh or rude behavior?

But things are pretty harsh and sometimes rude in the real world. Most of us have come to accept it that way, maybe I'll too soon!

After a month of struggling with job search, I along with a friend of mine signed up with a private agency. The agency took a minimum service fee and would arrange interviews for us in between short intervals of time.

The interviews they sent me for were not suitable for my skill sets. Another thing that nagged me was in case I got a job I would have to pay the agency half of my first month's income.

Luckily for me I never got the job, the only thing I got was a few more learning experiences. It did not work and I'll advise everyone to stay away from all such private agencies at all costs.

I'm not crying, just recycling my tears!

I was slowly beginning to feel lost in the never-ending search for the one job that would put an end to this search. Not knowing what to expect of myself and the whole situation, my mind was clouded with anxious thoughts.

And, having no clue as to how to deal with such situations, increased my anxieties ten fold.

This is the most difficult part of being unemployed, when you find yourself almost defeated by circumstances. People will start getting on your nerves, any small remark or even a look will leave you feeling misjudged.

Even though I had done exactly the opposite, I (now) think we should not react to such judgments or people at all. Some of those people actually mean well and I know some only mean to be mean towards us. But who cares about such meany and unkind people? I don't anymore!

This is where I live now, in a self dugout hole!

At this point, The hardest thing I found was finding the strength to go on. My mind was spiraling between negative thoughts like you can't, nothing will change, what's the point of trying and so on and so forth.

Once you feel your lowest, you no longer can feel low after that point. So, I didn't! I found my spirit not exactly high but at a friendly average mid range, which was enough for me to get past the day.

Days went by, on some of those days I found myself employed while on others unemployed. A few other days were also there when I chose to quit a job that took a lot of time and effort to get my hold on in the first place! That's another story I'm saving for another post.

For now, I shall end this post with a positive note on what has kept me going through out those days. And, that one thing is the friendly average mid range spirit of mine!

Educated unemployed Indian

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# TAXI TROUBLES IN KAMPALA



We'd just ended our second date. As I walked to the taxi, I thought about our discussion. Things he'd said. Things I'd divulged without intention – nothing earth shattering just some public-private information that wasn't universally known. I hopped into a near empty taxi and sat in my favorite corner. At the back, by the window where I could get the cool breeze, watch trees and buildings fly by while people and traffic transacted – turned out to be a life saver. With caution I began to draft a thank you text to my date when suddenly “bang, bang, bang” a man hit the taxi repeatedly. He attempted to catch the drivers attention, his communication wasn't clear. Cars were stacked up, traffic was at a standstill. I turned to make sense of this huge disruption and in that split second another hand grabbed at my phone.

The text was in mid sentence, I'd paused to formulate the idea. G o n e ! I thought, oh dear! There goes my phone. I'd been careful, guarded my bag, been discrete, studied my surroundings. This day alas! I was a victim. He'd never receive the text.

My hands trembled, passengers in the taxi and the next came alive.

“Kyi kyi?”

“Bamubye kyi?”

“What did he take?”

I was still in a state of shock.

All I could mutter was “my phone”

“Close your window. Keep your bag away” A passenger in the next taxi urged.

My contacts!  
I’d been diligent to collect local contacts -friends, people I could call on a whim.

Vulnerable! My beloved city left me vulnerable, fragile, insecure. It was crowded, congested, a sort of battle ground. I approached it each day with resolve – strapped, secured, locked, hidden, firm “Okay! Let’s do this!” My mind wandered.

The conductor reached down, picked a black box and handed it to me. It was my phone. My fingers trembled afresh. “But how? Did the thief throw it back into the taxi? Was the conductor in on some crazy prank? From where did the phone appear? Was it even my phone?” All these questions knocked around in my head. Traffic jam within and without.

I realized that in the moment the thief made to grab the phone my hands released it in a reflex action. It dropped and slid towards the front of the taxi. The chairs were still folded, that allowed a smooth sail to the conductors feet.

Two guys who’d been seated quietly turned and mentioned one after the other, “Just know, God is with you!” I agreed emphatically. I near began preaching the gospel of God’s goodness but realized they were probably part of the “choir”.

I rearranged the text message and sent it on it’s way explaining the technical difficulties I had getting the text across. Then the phone begun to ring incessantly, friends and family had a telepathic sense of urgency to talk, to meet, to catch-up.

My *kabiriiti* phone had been given a second lease on life on Kampala streets.

**Mary Odeke**

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# DO YOU LIKE TO COMPETE WITH OTHER people?

Life is an exam and every person will get different questions. We will compare with each other because the competition race is in human nature. While you are unhappy because someone is more successful than you, think about, how much you know about others and their problems?

Fashion magazines will offer an ideal of woman beauty, even Photoshop is behind it. Teenage girls will feel frustrated because they are too fat to reach modern standards. They forget the miracle of technology and many tricks how to look perfect in the photo. You don't walk in their shoes and you don't know about their bulimia and anorexia problems, because on the cover of the magazine is a fantastic face with the smile and shining eyes.

When you start to compare yourself to others, this is the beginning of identity lost. Someone is also envious of something you have. We can see this for example.

Two guys from Croatia, Dario and Robert are peers. They were studying at the same university and they graduated the same year. After 13 years, Dario changed a few good jobs, everywhere he got high position and his salary is bigger and bigger with every promotion. Meanwhile, he got married and he is a parent of one son.

Robert is also employed but as a civil servant. His salary is average and he has no interest in promotion because he doesn't want to work at weekends and overtime. He is engaged to his girlfriend and they have wedding plans. Robert is the big fan of parties with trance and house music, so there is no event without him. He spends his money to travel around when he is free and together with his girlfriend he enjoys in life.

Some people think that Dario is the perfect businessman, mature guy who knows what he wants from life. He is settled down and very serious. Other people think that he is indeed boring and that his wife must yawn every time in his presence. Also, his bags under eyes are invisible from the plane. He never sleeps good because of his responsibilities. He must take care not to get drunk because someone could see him and his reputation would be down. He must wear the suit and tie every day, together with his professional smile and kindness.

When you compete with someone else, you are showing weakness. This is the race with yourself. Your neighbor has the good car so you will buy it too. Your friend has expensive shoes, so you must buy this too.

**When you wish to progress, the best competitor is inside of you.**

You can upgrade yourself to the higher level without comparing with others. If you try to walk in other's shoes, it may be uncomfortable for you. When you walk on your path, your results will be good because that is your area. If you compete with someone else, you take a risk. You will buy BMW because your bank give you credit, but later it can cause you financial troubles because you wanted to compete.

The little girl in childhood wanted to grow up fast. She wears mother's dress and put her makeup. The result was shocking, her cheeks were red and eyes were twice bigger, so she had the style of an Indian warrior.

The same will happen if you compete with someone who is out of your league. He is too high for you and you can copy him, but people will recognize you as fake or poor. This is the race without the winner because your role model doesn't know that you wish to follow him.

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**I may not be everyone's cup  
of tea. But I am someone's  
double vodka**

***When you wish to progress,  
the best competitor  
is inside of you.***

# What I Didn't Know about Marriage Until I Got Married

*One of my friends got married last year. We have been close friends since we met when we were six years old. Even if we live in different towns we keep in touch. So I was talking to him on the phone the other day and asked him how married life is treating him. He began to tell me some good things. And I asked him what advice he would give to someone like me. He began to wax lyrical and then stopped himself saying buddy, look, I think I better put this down in writing. I will send you an email, God willing by Saturday.*

*True to his word on Saturday I found his email in my inbox. He had attached a pdf which contained his thoughts on the matter. Reading it, I was impressed by the depth of thought and the sincerity of his feeling. I immediately wanted to share it with my readers. So I called him, said hey look, I really like what you have written. It's a beautiful piece of prose. Can I share it with my readers?*

*He said, um, okay, wait, look, can I add something to it?*

*I said sure.*

*He said I will send it to you by Wednesday.*

*He was true to his word. I got it yesterday. And now here it is. All in his voice.*

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Hey bro. Hope you have been fine since the last talk we had a few days ago.

Straight to the question you asked.

It is an interesting one for sure. But a needful one and one that I feel I need to answer.

I remember when we met [childhood friend's name] in Nyeri, we talked about relating and when we got at my house I told you about my engagement with my wife, then my fiancée, [her name]. It has been a great journey especially that she loves God dearly. She is a godly woman!

Marriage to start off, it is a school with no end, without graduation at the end but at the beginning, the certificate is given at the beginning not at the end. I have seen the reality of this now as I continue in this wonderful Journey and Fellowship. I always desired a godly family because I really feared the otherwise, I had seen broken families and my honest desire was a family built on God and sustained by God. I believe that that is what is happening.

One of the things that I have learnt is that I am really changing, man, after marriage, I realized many weaknesses I had that I did not know. Man, I was so hard hearted, my heart was wicked but no one was this close to interrupt my inner heart and life. God has used marriage to change me. My sister has been a recipient of this relationship, the way I treat her is different and also many other girls that I interact with.

Secondly, my relationship with God has changed so much because I am learning that Love can only come from God and not from our strategies. We can be very selfish and individualistic, but marriage is taking me through a lesson of God being the source of everything so that when I pass anything it can only be from Him.

Now, a bit of a sermon up there! My life is quite organized bro. I am realizing being a bachelor is a good stage and we do our best, but in marriage you realize it's like leave a 1 star to a 7 star, man. Organization, cleanliness, focus, so much, man, from diet to dressing, from sitting room to bedroom, my personal life achieved deep order. I can only

thank God, bro. Women are wired with some deep sense of what I have said above, we are no match.

As a bachelor my house could host a few men, like 3 and all utensils are done, the bed was also a sofa during the day. Today I can host a number of people. I got chairs, utensils and even an extra bed. I do not understand how I lived without them and how I lived before. Never had a rug or such, I was just off like many men, I was myself then, I am still a bit of that, but she brings all the difference just like God ordained it, man.

Jubilee, KDF and snacks were a big part of the main meal, now snacking is almost done with; she even bakes bread, sweet homemade bread. Food is balanced, fruits etc. Food is good and tasty, I love eating at home. It is awesome to know that food can be a big difference. I used to be a very bad steward of what my body especially food and rest. Nowadays I am learning to rest and it has helped too so that I don't just get busy for the sake and end up being less effective.

A friend always close to me, always dear and loving, God given and intimate: this is a privilege. We can spend time together, comfort one another, celebrate each other and get to our vision together and growing and hoping to continue together. Happy times, sad times, lovely times, great times all manner of times.

Enjoying together! We hurt each and heal together and laugh again. This has been the closest fellowship and growing still.

Why a friend? I now truly believe that marriage is a place of deep and intimate friendship for friends. Many may want to marry beauty, wealth, cash, future security but I believe friendship is very key. A friend that is close. I think true and authentic friendship that is pure is one of the recipes for a marriage that is stable, not that it is the ultimate but it is part of the many. Though friendship is not a rule, it's my take! Some don't need friendship for long, godliness does not need friendship. Some meet, mesh and soon marry; they become friends along the journey. God is able to keep. It's just my opinion, but I still appreciate even the other.

This friendship continues and it grows. In marriage

people due to lack of understanding at times can start fighting even if they were friends. This is majorly because they target each other as enemies, but they forget they are mature adults who come from totally different backgrounds and need time to mesh well in their innermost private lives that no one has ever come close. Openness, honesty helps to mesh people. When I am not pleased I give my view, but in a good way that will not destroy my partner.

Marriages are built by people who have agreed to grow together and are willing to allow correction, help and also who are ready to speak out when not comfortable, people who are willing to unite and build instead of destroying each other and seeing each other as enemies. It is the enemy's strategy to cause marriage partners to view one another as enemies. Great lesson I have learnt. Our initial fights didn't last long since I learnt **we are to complement not to compete.**

As a man, I have learnt that there so much to manhood, not just being male or such but being THE Head and a Husband, Responsibilities and Tasks. Things that I had not imagined or thought of! Where it takes you beyond your limits and expands your tents. Issues of parenting and society, your social standards dramatically change. Social expectations change and people expect different things from you. I have been thinking and praying of our future.

I have to lead her, God willing, until we are Guka and Cucu! Crafting OUR vision, Enjoying all the fruits of marriage, sex without limits, fear or guilt, because it is sacred and done in the expected boundaries. Through the challenges of sickness and other things not planned for but God gives genuine rest and peace to us all. God has been developing us and training us to be mature in handling issues.

Maturity is intense in marriage if one allows God to help Him to be mature. I have seen it happening. Also in terms of how one looks at things, with time one realizes that there is growth. One cannot remain the same.

A woman labeled as yours, called by your name! Amazing! It's a totally new leaf turned. God leading you realize it is the image of Christ and the Church you are expressing. So I need to love her as the church.

These are some of the things that I have quickly typed to hit the Saturday's deadline. But we can share more and more.

How has your spiritual life been? I hope you are moving on well. How has your writing job been and what have you been up to lately?

God bless you man. Thanks.

Kind Regards,

[His name].

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## BLOOD SPEAKS.



©Poulomi Basu/WaterAid

What is life like when having your period puts your health at risk and means you are shunned by society? Rose George reports from Nepal and Bangladesh on menstrual taboos.

For Radha dinner is served at 7. She crouches down behind a shed, a good distance from her house, then waits. She knows what the menu will be: boiled rice, the same as yesterday and the day before. She knows that it will be her little sister who serves it, throwing the rice onto her plate from a height, the way you would feed a dog.

In Jamu, Radha's village in western Nepal, her status is lower than a dog's, because she is menstruating. She is only 16, yet, for the length of her period, Radha can't enter her house or eat anything but boiled rice.

Radha BishwaKarma ©Poulomi Basu/WaterAid

She can't touch other women – not even her grandmother or sister – because her touch will pollute them. If she touches a man or a boy, he will start shivering and sicken. If she eats butter or buffalo milk, the buffalo will sicken too and stop milking. If she enters a temple or worships at all, her gods will be furious and take their revenge, by sending snakes or some other calamity.

Here, menstruation is dirty, and a menstruating girl is a powerful, polluting thing. A thing to be feared and shunned.

After dinner, Radha prepares for bed. Darkness falls fast in Jamu and without mains electricity the villagers follow old rhythms and sleep with the dark. Radha's parents are both migrant workers in India, so she lives with her grandmother. Their house has a solar-powered light, as does the one opposite, where I'm staying with my travelling companions: the Communications and Gender Officer for WaterAid Nepal and our  
photographer.



The light is no use to Radha this week, because her bed is elsewhere. She leads me over the thoroughfare of pebbles and rocks that passes for a road, suitable only for motorcycles and walkers. Cars and buses must stop at the river, a four-hour walk away. We walk up a steep hill, through long snake grass, to a small lean-to structure. It looks like an animal shed, but it is smaller and meaner. This is the shed where the village's menstruating women and girls sleep.

© Alex Hedworth/Eye Candy

In the winter, Radha sleeps on the tiny enclosed ground floor, no bigger than a crawl space. The summer accommodation is an earthen floor on a platform above, four-foot square. Except for a grass roof, it is open to the elements.

There is not space even for one person to lie down, but tonight there will be three. Radha's relative Jamuna is also menstruating, and she'll be sleeping here along with her one-year old son. Still, Radha appreciates the company, as another woman is some protection against drunken men who conveniently forget about untouchability when it comes to rape. Although the stigma keeps women silent, rapes of women sleeping in these sheds are common enough to appear as occasional items in newspapers in faraway Kathmandu, and common enough for women to look down when they are mentioned. Also common are snake attacks. (I see three snakes there in three days.)



Sometimes there are four or five women in the shed, an unthinkable number. If the shed is that full, then girls and women must find other options. Up the field, I watch with disbelief as a 14-year-old girl shows me her sleeping arrangements for the night: the bare earth outside her family's house, with only a mosquito net for protection. It's only the third time she has had her period and already she is resigned. What can she do?

In the local dialect, Radha, her relative and the 14-year-old girl are 'chhau' (sometimes 'chau'). Originally meaning 'menstruation' in the Rawte dialect of Achham, it has come to mean 'untouchable menstruating woman'. The system of keeping girls and women apart is known as 'chhaupadi' ('padi' means 'woman').

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Menstrual taboos and restrictions are still practiced in dozens of countries across Asia and Africa. In neighboring India, I have met girls who told me seriously that their nail polish went rotten if they applied it during their period, and that they were forbidden from touching pickles. But chhaupadi is one of the most severe and damaging examples. In 2005, Nepal's Supreme Court declared it illegal. Three years later, the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare issued guidelines meant to eradicate the practice.

But western Nepal is remote both geographically and legislatively, and enforcement is rare. A 2010 survey in the mid- and far-western regions found that 19 per cent of women had been forced to live in chhaupadi sheds, but this figure rose to 52 per cent in the mid-western mountain areas and 50 per cent in the far-western hills.

We are in the mid-west, but not in mountain country where the practice is more endemic, so I wasn't sure of finding chhaupadi sheds. The first village we encounter is Narci, an hour's walk after the road runs out. There is a chhaupadi shed outside every house. Some contain possessions: a comb stuck in the thatch or a bottle of red nail polish. Some have schoolbooks.

In Narci, a group of women gather to talk, sitting at a safe distance on the steps outside a house, as one, Nandakala, is menstruating and she doesn't dare come closer. Her chhaupadi shed is nearby. She says, along with all the other women, that chhaupadi is necessary. If menstruating women don't observe the taboos, bad things happen. A buffalo could climb a tree. Men would start trembling and fall ill. Snakes will be brought by the sin. A woman holding a small scythe gets animated at this: "Yes, it's true. A big snake came into my house."

In this group setting, none of them protest. They accept their situation, even the lack of sanitary pads. "We don't even wear underwear. What do you expect? We are jungle people." Instead, they let the blood flow, or make a sort of loincloth from old saris that they tie between their legs. As for washing and drying the cloths, that must be done in secret, if at all. It is discreet, but also dangerous: unless menstrual cloths are properly washed and dried in sunlight, they can be a health hazard.



The women shrug. It is our tradition, they say. It's what our parents and grandparents did, so it's what we do. But away from the group, as she has her picture taken in her miserable chhaupadi shed, Nandakala is more frank. "Of course I hate it," she tells the photographer. In the winter it's cold. In the summer it's hot. The restrictions are stifling and unfair. "Why should the gods punish us? Why should women be punished? But what the hell can we do?"

On the four-hour road trip from Nepalgunj, the location of the nearest airport, we encountered signs in Nepali, declaring villages to be ODF (open-defecation-free), meaning that they now have adequate toilets. But many do not: 15 million people in Nepal – about half the population – have no toilet. Just under 8,000 Nepali children still die every year from water- and sanitation-related diseases (most from diarrhoea), according to WaterAid. Those deaths are usually caused by faecal particles getting into food or water, and would be easily prevented by decent sanitation, clean water and hygiene.

On paper, Nepal's commitments to sanitation are impressive: the government plans to ensure 53 per cent sanitation coverage nationwide by 2015, rising from 43 per cent in 2009. But its efforts to reduce menstrual taboos and chhaupadi are less admirable. Despite the Supreme Court's judgement, menstrual taboos are so far from being eradicated in Nepal that they have their own national holiday.

In early September in Nepal, Hindus – who make up 81 per cent



of the country's 30.5 million people – celebrate Rishi Panchami, a festival that commemorates a woman who was reborn as a prostitute because she didn't follow menstrual restrictions. It is a women's holiday, and so Nepal's government gives all women a day off work. This is not to recognize the work done by

women, but to give them the time to perform rituals that will atone for any sins they may have committed while menstruating in the previous year. (Girls who have not begun menstruating and women who have ceased to menstruate are exempt.)

At 3am we find thousands of women queuing up at Pashupatinath temple, Kathmandu's grandest, ready to atone. They are not ignorant about the nature of the rituals, as I crassly expected them to be, nor is this something done by rote. "We may have touched a man by mistake," they say, queuing so tightly that the line looks like a mile-long embrace. "We have to do this because our ancestors did." Even the female police officers standing nearby see nothing wrong with it. "I can't do the rituals this year because I'm on duty," says one, holding a cup of warm tea in the cold morning darkness, "so next year I'll do double."

She is serious, and so are the five women we find at a river's edge nearby, ritually washing themselves 365 times. Dressed in red petticoats, a sacred thread around their waists, they spend hours performing the ritual washing of their private parts, belly button, elbows, armpits, heart and head, while men on the far river bank suddenly find the need to do an hour's calisthenics right in front of these near-naked women. The women finally cleanse their hair by smearing it with fresh buffalo dung, before washing it with cow urine and milk. I ask the eldest woman whether she believes she has sinned. "Well if I didn't, I wouldn't have done all this, would I?"

Rishi Panchami enrages many educated Nepali women. It's not so much the superstition but the legitimacy that the government gives it by providing a holiday that declares women to be dirty and polluting. At a menstrual hygiene event put on by WaterAid in Kathmandu, Ashutosh Tiwari, WaterAid's Country Representative for Nepal, made an explicit but unpopular case. "You might wonder why a water and sanitation NGO is talking about menstrual hygiene. It's because we are trying to make the important point that for women's empowerment we should start with something like menstrual hygiene."

Even so, menstrual hygiene is a hard sell for many sanitation and WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) NGOs. Privately, female Nepali sanitation activists tell me that their male colleagues see no need to object to chhaupadi or Rishi Panchami, because it is tradition. This cultural relativism is both wrong and costly: it's well established by now that countries with poor sanitation pay for it. India loses 6.4 per cent of its GDP to health and other costs caused by its lack of sanitation (untimely deaths, productivity lost to ill-health or disease, hospital beds used by patients with sanitation-related disease). Globally, poor sanitation loses the world \$260 billion a year. No economic research on the costs of not having clean water and sanitation has yet been done in Nepal, but in nearby Pakistan, the total economic loss caused by poor sanitation is equivalent to 3.9 per cent of its GDP, and across all low-to-middle-income countries the average loss is 1.5 per cent.

The specific health impacts of poor menstrual hygiene have been little explored. Anecdotally, the use of unhygienic menstrual protection has been linked to reproductive tract infections such as bacterial vaginosis and vulvovaginal candidiasis, as well as secondary infertility, urinary tract infections and anaemia. Yet a 2013 survey of existing research literature found that evidence to support any link between poor menstrual hygiene and these conditions was "weak and contradictory". "Raising awareness regarding menstruation and hygienic practices," the authors wrote in their conclusion, "has remained largely a neglected area in terms of research, despite its increasing popularity amongst public health organizations."

There are other costs. A PlanIndia study in 2010 found that 23 per cent of Indian girls dropped out of school permanently when they reached puberty, and that girls missed school for an average five days a month each for the lack of decent sanitation or menstrual products. Their schools had no toilets or disgusting ones, or there was no privacy. They had struggled for years without toilets, but when they began to menstruate, it got too difficult. It was easier to drop out.



We know already that better-educated girls are less likely to die in childbirth or of HIV/AIDS, are more likely to use contraception, are more likely to know about good child nutrition, and generally have a better chance of a healthy and productive life. As such, any sign that school dropouts are linked to menstrual hygiene should have government officials in education, development, empowerment and health rushing to build safe toilets and talk loudly and frankly about periods – if they weren't as hampered by taboo as those women in their petticoats performing rituals to right imaginary fault.

### **“Goddesses are women, aren't they?”**

On my second day in western Nepal, we walk 90 minutes to Tatopani, a village of 95 households that contains an excellent food shack, the village government offices, and 16-year-old Radha's school. Along the way, the chhaupadi sheds, initially visible in every yard, become rarer. This is because Tatopani has launched a chhaupadi minimisation program, and it's working.

In the village offices, a group of concerned citizens has gathered. Some sit on the village WASH committee. Some are health workers. Two are young men, a rare sight in these villages because nearly all the men have gone to India to work. Green paddy fields, dramatic forests and rushing rivers do not compare to earning a decent wage as a security guard or labourer.

The young men are the most passionate. Their families migrated here from the far-western region of Achham, where chhaupadi is even more rooted. But Achham is also where the first chhaupadi-free villages have emerged, and where a government minister's wife in 1998 became the first menstruating woman in her district to spend a night in her own house.

In earlier times, the villagers tell me, the menstrual restrictions probably made sense. Women could have a few days' rest while they were weak from blood loss. The men were around to do the chores and there were family members to do the cooking. Things are different now. The men are gone, the women must still work, and the deprivation and damage done by chhaupadi is greater.

“They have to stay outside but still do all the difficult jobs,” says Kabi Raj Majhi, a young man who is the most vocal of all the villagers and the chair of the committee. When WaterAid's local NGO partner NEWAH (Nepal Water for Health) arrived in the village to build a water point, they saw an opportunity to change things. “They said women should be allowed to use the main water point even when they were menstruating,” says Kabi. “A traditional healer objected, and they said, fine, use another water point then.” He soon capitulated.

An old man in the corner begins to speak: “Before, they were kept outside for seven days. Now it's five and I think that's fine, but it should stay at five.” He knows that chhaupadi is necessary because of what happened during Nepal's civil war, when 17,000 people died. These western regions were full of Maoist

rebels. “When the Maoists were here,” the old man says firmly, “they didn’t observe chhaupadi. They let women in the house. And then the Maoists died in the war.”

The others shout him down, but they are realistic. The problem isn’t men like him, or traditional healers. “We can change them,” says Madan Kumar Majhi, Kabi’s cousin and a member of the Chhaupadi Minimization Committee. “But it’s the women who are the barrier.” The mothers and mothers-in-law are the worst. A female community health volunteer tells the room how she pretends to be menstruating just so her mother-in-law starts shaking and trembling and pretending to be sickened by chhaupadi. “But when I am actually menstruating, I touch her and nothing happens.” She laughs, but still she has to observe the taboos.

Change comes slowly and it is still limited. “Sometimes,” says Kabi, “we have only got the women to be allowed to sleep inside the compound. We are trying to persuade people to set aside a separate room for chhaupadi. We know it’s not perfect, but we are trying. There’s no electricity in chhaupadis so it’s damaging girls’ education.” Before, it was worse: girls weren’t allowed books because they were considered symbols of the goddess of knowledge.

A short walk away, I sit down with a group of girls at Radha’s school. They have come in specially to talk to me, even though there is a government strike today and school is closed. Nepal’s government is fragile and any political party can call a national strike, which happens frequently. These girls, though, are not fragile. They are feisty and smart.

They say that chhaupadi is embarrassing. “We know that you don’t do it,” says Pabitra, 17. “They don’t do it in developed countries.” But only four out of a dozen have been freed from sleeping outside in chhaupadi sheds. “It makes no sense,” says Anjana, whose mother is a health worker. Her mother came home two years ago and said they weren’t going to do chhaupadi any more. “Women bleed even more during childbirth but they can stay in the home. Goddesses are women, aren’t they? They bleed but they’re allowed to stay in the temple. Why can’t we?”

She knows the answer. “It’s a lack of education. People think that because it’s an old practice it’s authentic and powerful.” She says they talk about menstruation in their health lessons at school. “The teacher tells us it’s not a good thing.”

It is an irony of chhaupadi that talking about periods is easier in Nepal than in many other countries. Research in Karachi, Pakistan, for example, found that one in two girls aged 14 to 17 knew nothing about menstruation. But these girls in Tatopani knew exactly what to expect when they started their period, because they had seen their sisters and mothers move out to the shed. So they talk openly – more openly perhaps than the average teenage girl in the UK might – about what they use for sanitary protection. Some use sanitary pads, some are happy with cloths, although they dry them by hiding them under other clothes on washing lines.

When I ask them what they want to do when they leave school, they all say the same thing. Leave this place. Never be a housewife: see how they suffer! They want education and freedom. “I want to be a social worker,” says Anjana. “If I learn, I can teach these people and maybe I can change them.”

## On the factory floor

On any given day, 300 million of the two billion women and girls of menstruating age across the world will be bleeding. On any given day, the taboos, restrictions and ignorance about menstruation will be costing millions of dollars, and damaging development, health and wellbeing.

The connection between installing sanitation and income is now well known: investing a dollar in sanita-

tion can save a country up to \$8 in avoided costs. It's likely one of the best health bargains we know of. But it has taken years for sanitation to be spoken about openly. In 2000, when the Millennium Development Goals – a set of global self-improvement wishes to be achieved by 2015 – were announced, sanitation wasn't even included, even though diarrhoea was then – and remains – the second biggest killer of children under five. Even after countless battles, sanitation has only become a sub-target of a sub-goal. In the Post-2015 Development Agenda, meant to update the Millennium Development Goals, things had improved. There is now no question of ignoring sanitation, but there is still silence around menstruation.

Even in high-income countries, menstruation is supposed to stay hidden. I grew up in the UK, where sanitary pads and tampons are widely available, as are clean, private toilets in which to change them and bins in which to dispose of them. But I have never excreted the blue liquid used to represent blood by anyone advertising sanitary pads, nor have I ever seen a sanitary product that isn't being advertised for its discretion.

In 2012, I spent three weeks on a travelling sanitation carnival in India, the Great WASH Yatra, where one of the stalls was a Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab. Of the 12,000 women and girls who came to the lab, 71 per cent had had no idea what was happening when they started their periods. Most thought they were injured; some thought they were dying. “In much of the developing world,” writes Dr Catherine Dolan of the University of Oxford's Said Business School, “menarche [the onset of menstruation] is a fraught process, characterized by uncertainty, fear and distress.” The concealment and silence around menstruation causes damage to women's health and education, and also to their economic prospects. And it is widespread.

In 2010, a new initiative began in Dhaka, Bangladesh. HERproject (standing for Health Enables Returns) is a program run by Business for Social Responsibility (BSR), a membership organization of 250 companies worldwide, including Microsoft, Sony, Pepsi and Coca-Cola. Dhaka was an appropriate place for a business-backed NGO, because many BSR members source products from Bangladesh's 5,000 garment factories. There are three million Bangladeshis working in the garment industry, and 80 per cent are women.

Although the ethical sweatshop-free movement of the last 20 years has led to big changes in the garment industry, tragedies still happen and, when they do, they are devastating. When the Rana Plaza factory building in Bangladesh collapsed last year, 1,133 people died. Access to factories is difficult for NGOs, who can be regarded with suspicion by factory management. HERproject, though, had the backing of its members, who understood that healthy workers are better workers. And the need was enormous: most garment workers arrive in the cities with little education, Nazneen Huq, HERproject Bangladesh's director, told me. They come aged 16 or younger, but with a certificate from the village leader saying they are 18. They leave their villages too soon to benefit from rural NGO programs, and there are barely any NGOs working on hygiene or education in urban areas.

With the clout provided by BSR's members, such as Timberland, H&M and Primark, HERproject Bangladesh, under Huq, gained rare access into the factories, and initiated discussions. The remit was broad: to improve the health of female workers. Workers are educated in nutrition, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and hygiene. All of these things are crucial. Female workers in Dhaka's factories told HERproject facilitators that nutritious food was for rich people. “They thought that lentils or pumpkin were poor people's food,” says one facilitator who accompanied me on factory visits. “So they didn't eat it. We had to tell them that poor people's food and rich people's food have the same vitamins.”

But Huq also needed to talk periods. She knew from her work in Pakistan that menstrual hygiene among factory workers was poor. Factory managers freely admitted to her that their female workers were not turning up for work for several days every month. When a factory operates on production lines, a miss-

ing piece-worker is noticed.

Huq, who has worked with garment factory workers for years, had two simple implements: frankness and economic loss. “They knew that women were going absent, and they knew that it had to do with periods, but they didn’t dare talk about it,” she says. Her tactic was to focus on what they would talk about, which was business. “I would say, ‘If you have 1,000 workers who are women, and each woman is absent one to three days...’ They answered, embarrassed, ‘Yes, yes. If 500 are absent for one day you lose 500 productive days.’ Then they get very shy, but they say, ‘Yes. It makes sense.’”

All these factory managers knew about workplace safety, they just hadn’t thought about health, beyond providing the medical centre required by law. They didn’t appreciate the ways that poor health costs them money. They didn’t know, for example, that 80 per cent of their female workers didn’t use sanitary pads.

One of the first factories that joined HERproject is in Ashuria, a

suburb just a few miles from downtown Dhaka, but a three-hour trip in the city’s appalling traffic. It is a good factory, as factories go, and all the workers are wearing homemade masks, sometimes made from material covered in cartoons that will become children’s leggings or pyjamas. It is properly ventilated, and there are decent toilets. Downstairs, there is a crèche.

Sarita\*, a 25-year-old worker, comes away from her post on the finishing section to talk. The HERproject model works by educating peer educators, who are then responsible for disseminating information to 20 other female workers.



Sarita came to Dhaka four years ago, and as soon as she started work, she managed her period as everyone else did, by using scraps of cloth from the factory floor. They call it ‘joot’. “We got it from the cleaners. They would sweep it up and give it us. It was very itchy and I was in a pain a lot,” she says. Every month, she stayed at home for one or two days. “The joot only lasted half an hour. There was leaking, discharge. But we didn’t know about reproductive health, even though we are women.”

In another smaller factory nearby, a woman named Vandana\* leads me to the cutting room. Here, bare-foot men run along long tables pulling bales of cloth behind them. It’s quite beautiful to watch. Vandana, the factory’s welfare officer, leads me to a bin near one of the tables. “There. That is joot.” It used to be her job to gather the joot in secret and hand it over discreetly to whoever asked for it. As in other factories that HERproject visited, discharges and infections are rampant. Every woman I speak to has regularly had discharge and health problems from using joot. Up to 10 per cent of workers are going absent. When they are asked, the factory managers – all male – know what is behind it. “One told me that he was getting



requisitions to clean the sewer pipes all the time,” Huq tells me, “because they were clogged with joot.”

Most women here now use sanitary pads. A central part of HERproject is to persuade factories to buy in sanitary pads from local supplier ACI and sell them at a highly subsidised cost. In this factory’s medical centre, a basic but clean room off of the factory floor, there are several boxes of pads, sold to workers for 31 taka (compared with a market price of 80–90 taka, or \$1).

The compliance officer here is an intense young man. “We had real problems with absenteeism. And obviously this is a production-based factory. But even so, the general manager was embarrassed to talk about menstruation.” Now, with absenteeism down to 6 per cent, according to the factory’s records, embarrassment is redundant. Sewer pipes are no longer clogged. In another Dhaka factory, absenteeism dropped by half. A factory manager told the London *Times* that although she saw the program as “just another project”, she had had to change her mind. Now the male workers are asking for a similar project for them too.

It costs around \$5,000 to \$7,000 to set up a HERproject, and HERproject Bangladesh is researching return on investment relating to menstrual hygiene, because persuasive figures here will help to unclog managerial blockages that still sometimes occur. The program model requires an hour a week for the training in the first years, and not every manager is willing to take that time from the production line.

But even with rudimentary figures, a report on business returns states that managers recognise “non-quantifiable benefits of HERproject initiatives”, such as improved worker satisfaction with management and improved reputation among factory clients. “The HERproject has also helped my relationship with the women workers,” a factory manager named Mr Riaz told the *Times*. “They are not so shy to talk to me anymore. If there are problems, I now hear about them.’

As I sit in a refresher course for peer educators, surrounded by young women wearing pink aprons and headscarves made from the school uniform material the factory produces, someone brings me a brown paper bag. All around me, women are talking with frankness and freshness about a taboo subject, like the schoolgirls of Tatopani. As the women discuss sexually transmitted infections, the health and hygiene of the reproductive tract, and the unquestionable value of pumpkins, I open the bag and find a sanitary pad taken from the factory’s subsidised supply. Produced in Bangladesh and branded by Savlon, its name is Freedom.

**Rose George travelled to Kathmandu and western Nepal with WaterAid Nepal. Some names, marked with a \*, have been changed.**

Rose George

<https://mosaicscience.com/story/menstrual-taboo-periods-shame-women>



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# FASHION AND THE BIBLE.



N o w here is something I have never given any thought to, *clothing and the bible*. I really enjoy fashion, textiles, shoes, clothing, and the idea of being clothed in white raiment really resonates with me, but beyond that, I've never even considered it before.

*"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life..."*

White in ancient days was very rare, very precious and priceless. No bleach, no tide pods, and most fibers are going to be yellow or grey to begin with, so to even create *white raiment* was almost beyond our means, certainly something reserved for royalty.

So anyway, Robert Covolo wrote an article for Christianity Today called [The Biblical Meaning of Clothing](#). Apparently he is pastor and a PhD student whose dissertation is on *fashion theory and theology*.

that fascinating.

I have a friend who passed away a few years back and although I miss her, I had so many visions of her consumed by joy, her arms overflowing with purple cloth, velvets, satin, brocade, and lace, ribbons, trims of every sort. Heaven is where all the best textiles are, I'm telling you. More than you can carry.

Recently we had an adorable moment in church, pastor was explaining talk to Lord, consult with the Lord, discuss your choices with Him. Then he said, "but you don't have to look in your closet every morning and ask Him what to wear," and a woman exclaimed, *Oh but you do! Indeed, why wouldn't you?*

It was adorable because a few hearts were totally with her on that. Like no one should ever miss out on the sheer joy of saying, *Lord what should I wear today that will delight my soul and be pleasing to you?* But it was funny too, because that is probably more of a female thing. Little girls often like to play dress up and later in life to impress and delight our fathers, prom dates, husbands. From nine to 99, I'm telling you, looking good just lifts up your soul.

So no, you don't have to ask the Lord what to wear, by why wouldn't you just want to? I mean, *so sings my soul*. God sees us at our worst, and our best, so it's not about "have to" at all, it's just about adding one more layer of bliss to your walk with Him.

Clothing actually does play an interesting role in the bible and is often used as a metaphor, a cultural reference to make a point. Understanding some of these concepts can enrich the stories being told in the bible. Deuteronomy speaks of the significance of not looking out for your brother's widow and how, *"then his brother's wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face. And she shall answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother's house. And his family name in Israel will be called 'The House of the Unsandaled.'"*

Photo by Artem Bali on Pexels.com

I am laughing here, but this is serious business, don't be an unsandaled man, least someone spit in your face! However it is not all bad. Often in Jewish days the ritual of the sandals had more to do with a property exchange, a covenant, a voluntary surrender, an agreement between allies. Shoes were often removed before entering a Holy place or entering into a Holy contract.

In the tale of Ruth and Boaz, the ritual of the sandal was not so much a shaming thing as it was a ceremonial ritual, like a pinky swear. Gross, but you would take your sandal off and spit in it, to cheerfully release your claim, to bless a marriage, as we see with the unnamed kinsman redeemer.

I once attended a Jewish wedding and at the reception all four of the bride's brothers took off their shoe and spit into it. It was charming and funny and calls us back to an ancient ritual.



Photo by Suzy Hazelwood on Pexels.com

<https://insanitybytes2.wordpress.com>

# 2018-2019 FASHION COLOR TRENDS/ BIG TRENDING COLORS



Different colors have ruled the past and each year has had its own fast color trends depending on different events scheduled for the year. Major companies across the world and their expected events are seen to contribute significantly on matters that relate to color, a factor that has been seen even in 2019. Closer to the 2018 Gen-Z that took control of the year, 2019 will see a major change with the buttermilk yellow coming in strongly. The soft and light nature of the color will see it take control perfectly on the major plans for the year that will require such shades.

The shades of blue seen in 2018 are likely to be extended to 2019 with the trend for the year turning from 2018 sky blue to the powder blue in 2019. The color being slightly deeper than sky blue. It will see the major control on matters of dressing especially on the blazers and the dresses. Most of the celebrities have also appeared on stage wearing green colors in the shows they have a little matter that is likely to impact 2019.

Deeper shades of brown are likely to trend in 2019 with chocolate brown expected to take the lead. The auburn red color has also signaled to trend in the year with more warm browns especially reddish seen in the days to come

2019 fashion color trends is already a matter that is taking great concern. Many were the times people talked about the primary colors and how they topped when it comes to the world color trend. The case has dramatically changed bringing new colors into the trend fashion and this is evident for 2019.



*The above colors are therefore the voice that will control 2019 and a clear indication of how they will look like when you plan to stock any of your stores or run an event in 2019.*

Thanks!

Sharonchy

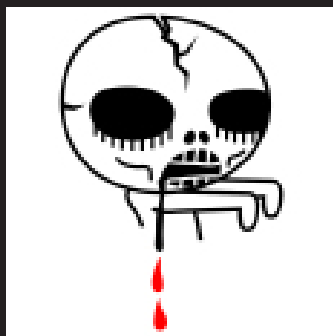
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## Fashion tips for the unfashionable



Every morning is the same confrontation with the same dilemma: what am I going to wear?

While a sheer delight to some, this conundrum is a tedious chore for most of us. The *haut monde*, for instance, factor in the season and trends, textures and fabric, color matching, accessorizing, a slew of niggling, but — to them — intriguing details. In their eyes, appearance counts.



For the rest of us, the *hoi polloi*, clothed is the goal. Period. For us, being clean and dry is all we ask. Wet and dirty is exclusively for indoors, shut away from society. Picture yourself when you step from the shower and notice the distinct, unavoidable caveman similarities. Motivation flies right out the window. Which is precisely why I developed my system. Fashion is too much work.

My process is foolproof: shorts and tshirt April through October, Levi's and turtleneck November through March. For a formal or business-y occasion? Khakis and collared shirt. Grab whatever's on top or at the front, tuck, zip, cinch, tie, and go. Beginning to end, we're talking 10 minutes, tops. I could do it in my sleep and it often looks like I did.

The beauty part is, I blend right into the woodwork. No one pays any attention to me, I become, for all intents and purposes, invisible. Out in the world I'm the human equivalent of white noise in my bland, conventional clothes. There's actually a name for this particular type of couture: *normcore*. I, however, call it camouflage. The puzzle is why I use my clothes as a hiding place.



## normcore

*noun*

A style of dressing that involves the deliberate choice of unremarkable or unfashionable casual clothes, i.e., boring.



The greatest difficulty? You need to be comfortable with a low bar in terms of appearance. And I am. I don't wear makeup or jewelry, have low maintenance, wash-and-go hair, don't mind wrinkles in my clothes or on my face, and I rarely look in the mirror. Although that does come back to bite me — I forget to check my zipper a lot. I don't know why, I just do. Next time, would you be kind enough to point it out to me? Thank you.

The whirly girl

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