

‘CHHAUPADI’, BRINGING AWARENESS ON
MENSTRUATION TABOO,
USING DESIGN STRATEGY

By

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Abstract: In the Western part of Nepal, in remote Himalayan villages, menstruating girls and women are banished to a faraway shed or dingy-huts because people believe that they are untouchable (B. S. Schultz). This custom is called 'Chhaupadi', Chhau meaning, menstruation, and Padi, meaning women. Formal education about menstruation is not provided in schools until grade eight; by that time almost all the girls already have their periods. These topics are stigmatized even among family members. Just some outcomes associated with Chhaupadi include infection, suffocation, snakebites, malnutrition, rape, and even death (Nguyen). The Supreme Court of Nepal banned Chhaupadi in 2005 and criminalized it in 2017 (Robinson, 193-94). But the ingrained tradition is still alive. After the huts and sheds were demolished by women's rights activists, girls and women were banned to forests and caves.

The goal of this thesis is to address the social issue 'Chhaupadi' custom through meaningful visual design. The power of a strong visual can help viewers develop an empathetic understanding of social issues such as the menstruation taboo. This thesis covers the design of materials including storybooks, posters, motion graphics, and a website to reach the two sets of target audiences to bring awareness on 'Chhaupadi' custom. The first target audience is young girls and boys (ten years and above) in Western Nepal and the second target audience is the general public (adults aged eighteen and above). This thesis also reviews the historical backgrounds of visual narrative, collage narrative, the influence of historical evidence of moving sequences, background and basics of website design, visual influences, and several methodologies used to design the projects.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The 'Chhaupadi' custom followed in Western Nepal is the topic I am covering for my thesis. The projects in this thesis explores visual techniques to bring awareness on this specific menstruation taboo 'Chhaupadi'. In this chapter I provide a brief introduction to the problem that drives my thesis 'Chhaupadi' custom and proposes the design solutions to cast light upon this sensitive issue.

Menstruation as taboo

Menstruation signifies the healthy growth of adolescent girls and marks the reproductive years in a woman's life. However, menstruation has been treated as a taboo from historical times until today in many parts of the world. Several regions around the globe such as parts of India, Italy, Polynesia, Germany, Spain, and Holland, etc. have had several theories and practices regarding menstruation in primitive societies (Delaney).

The idea of banishment of women during the menstrual cycle gave birth to menstruation huts, usually built away from the village, out of dry leaves and bark. Those were cramped dwelling where menstruating girls and women live throughout the cycle, either following a purifying ritual or simply live isolated depending upon the cultural set norms (Delaney).

Cultural practices involving menstruation still exist in countries like Nepal, India, Pakistan, Iran, and Bangladesh and are clouded by religious, social and cultural restrictions. My work focusses on development of graphic design materials aimed towards increasing awareness about ‘Chhaupadi Custom,’ one such discriminatory practices regarding menstruation in a rural community in Nepal.

Personal Background: Bara Pikayau

Nepal is a small country with diverse cultural, religious and geographical backgrounds. Different cultural groups have different festivals, ceremonies and religious beliefs. The rituals surrounding menstruation is also different based on cultural practices. To situate my discussion of Chhaupadi in this thesis, I am sharing my personal experience about my specific cultural experience coming from Kathmandu Valley, an urban setting from Nepal. Which is similar in some aspect when it comes to isolation and different in many aspects compared to the thesis subject ‘Chhaupadi’ custom that is followed in Western Nepal.

In the Newari culture in Nepal where I come from, girls in their first period are supposed to be hiding/living in a dark room for twelve days. This ritual is only followed for the very first menstruation, therefore it is a one-time event. Throughout confinement, only female members of the family and friends are allowed to visit. When I had my first period I was strictly bound in a room where even sunlight was blocked by multiple layers of curtains. On the twelfth day, a ceremony was held with rituals involving several steps including ‘Bara Pikayau’ meaning greeting the sun. This occasion is also marked as a girl’s marriage with the holy Sun. Therefore, I was dressed as a bride. A feast among family members and friends followed the ritual. (This is one of the very important

celebrations in a girl's life that introduces her to puberty and womanhood.) My personal experience during this confinement was a mixed feeling with lots of questions unanswered. Being a twelve-year-old girl, I did not understand what all this meant but the celebration as a feast that followed was something I looked up to. Growing up, I realized that there are several ceremonies that we celebrate apart from the festivals in Newari culture, and 'Bara Pikayau' is just one example that marks the menarche.

This occasion is an example that contradicts the idea that treats menstruation as a taboo and is supposed to be kept secret, while at the same time the strict ban that confines the menstruating girl inside a room followed by a ritual and feast announces to the whole society that the girl has reached puberty. I come from Bhaktapur, one of the cities in Kathmandu Valley. The experiences of girls and women on their period, coming from remote areas in Western Nepal, is much worse compared to the one I have experienced. The 'Chhaupadi' custom followed in Western Nepal is the topic I am covering for my thesis.

Chhaupadi Defined:

In the western, hilly villages of Nepal a segregationist custom involving menstruating girls and women is still in practice. The name of this custom is 'Chhaupadi'. 'Chhau' meaning menstruation and 'Padi' meaning women, derived from the Raute dialect of Achham district (Kadariya et al. 53-58). People following this custom consider menstruating girls and women impure and untouchable. During menstruation, girls and women are prohibited from practicing normal daily activities (B. S. Schultz). They are not allowed to live in their homes and enter the kitchen or temple. They are forced to isolate themselves and live-in makeshift dwellings not big enough to stretch and lie down

properly. The huts range in design; some are roofed with straw but have no solid walls; some are stone and mud mortar built with very small space and no windows; and some are just wooden poles with an uplifted wooden plank for floor and wooden roof (Figure 1). Sometimes these places are even cowsheds or other animal shelters located near the house.



Figure 1 Photo of a 'Chhaupadi' hut with wooden poles and no walls, by Poulomi Basu

Consequences of Chhaupadi:

As a result of Chhaupadi, girls and women are subject to severe living conditions. During their stay in the menstruating huts known as 'Chhau-goths', women have no access whatsoever to proper nutrition and hygienic facilities. Due to very primitive and unprotective design of these huts, the women staying here are at a constant risk of being attacked by wild animals, bitten by snakes, or even being raped by local deviants. These primeval huts have extremely poor ventilation with no heating facilities or proper smoke outlets. As a result, women who make fires to fight off cold during the night are at a risk of being suffocated due to the smoke trapped in the hut. Several deaths due to suffocation have been reported recently (Preiss).

There are no records about the origins of this custom. It seems to have been accepted by the local women who partake in it without a question, despite being aware of the aforementioned risks. Owing to the patriarchal social structure, the women have no choice but to follow the custom and give it a continuity. The Supreme Court of Nepal banned the custom in 2005 and criminalized it in 2017 (Preiss). Consequently, the huts and sheds were demolished by women's rights activists. This, however, did not necessarily make matters easy for all women. Women were still forced to make 'Chhau-goths' in the nearby forest-caves. This forced practice has further complicated the issue and increased the number of casualties. It also reveals the deeply rooted nature of this societal problem that has its roots in a lack of education and awareness. The rural community is cut off from the advances and awareness of the modern world involving gender equity and human rights. Hence, criminalization of Chhaupadi practice, though an important step is not expected to solve the problem altogether. Legislative measures like

these have proven to be inadequate as shown by Chhaupadi related deaths of girls as recently as 2019 (Schultz). This strongly suggests the necessity of grass-root level awareness programs.

Public awareness activities through dissemination of posters, pamphlets, booklets, staging street plays have proven to be effective in addressing social issues like child-marriage, untouchability, maternal health, female education, and child labor (White). The purpose of my thesis work is to develop educational materials that use graphic design approach to raise public awareness of the negative nature of Chhaupadi. I intend to target a broad range of audiences, specifically the younger minds in the local settings towards abolishment of such a superstitious and inhumane practice. I also will be addressing those audience members who have been enlightened about Chhaupadi practices and who might be in a position to help rectify the situation. In preparation of such design works, I intend to distance myself from vilification of any specific group of people. Considering the sensitive nature of the issue which requires cooperation from all the members of the community, I will take a humanistic approach in the design and implementation of my suggested materials.

Proposed Solution:

To address this sensitive issue, I propose the design of directly deliverable storybooks for the young people in the affected region. Girls and boys coming of age will be targeted as the primary audience of this project (Ten years and above). The secondary audience will be the general public (eighteen years and above) which can help disseminate the educational materials to the primary target group. In order to reach the secondary audience, a number of media and projects will be involved. A series of posters and

motion design will be employed to introduce the topic. Finally, a website will be designed in order to reach a wide range of audience. The website will be used to sell the educational materials related to the project. The proceeds will be used for the welfare of the people hard hit by this discriminatory practice of Chhaupadi custom.

Methodology

I have derived the two different audience groups for this thesis based on two main factors. The first factor is the goal of bringing awareness in the affected region about the mal practices of 'Chhaupadi' custom. The second factor is the visual research, studies and explorations towards finding suitable communication medium for the awareness campaign.

The first and primary target audience is girls and boys (ten years and above) in Western Nepal. I decided to design storybooks for this primary audience considering the coming of age for both girls and boys. Eleven years and twelve years are the average ages for girls and boys respectively to begin puberty(Ghosh, 30). Which is time to start introducing the topic 'menstruation' and most importantly introduce menstruation as a biological process. The school going children with the knowledge that menstruation should not be stigmatized, will carry the message to their family and friends, therefore disseminating the message to the society. Story writing tailored to the subject involving the practice of 'Chhaupadi' custom is the primary tool/method I used for this project. The specific steps and methods used in the illustration and design of the storybooks are covered in a separate chapter.

The remaining projects include poster design, motion graphics and website design. These projects are aimed towards the secondary audience (general public,

eighteen years and above). The selection of this secondary audience is to ensure that they can be the contributors in achieving the primary goal of free distribution of the story books to the primary audience. Mixed media collage making technique is used for the poster design. Traditional (hand-crafted) method along with the printed (typed out) message is used in order to maintain the tactile nature in poster. Hands on work is selected over the digital print for enhancing the human nature of the subject and add tangible aspect to the poster. The series of poster introduces the custom 'Chhaupadi', states the reason behind its practice and its consequences. A detailed set of studies/explorations used in the making process of the poster is elaborated in a separate chapter- Collage Poster Series.

Researching and reading news articles about 'Chhaupadi' custom, published in newspapers and online platforms, I came across a documentary published by New York Times (March 8, 2019). I used the final five freedom quotes from the documentary and adapted them in the motion graphics project. This project pairs the visual narrative with audio to enhance the sensory experience, which can help the audiences, connect with the subject matter more intimately.

Interactive website design is the final project. The interactive functions (click and scroll) of the website allow people to donate or buy art books and artworks based on menstruation. The proceeds and earnings generated from this UI (user interface) design will be used to make the storybooks available for free distribution to the young girls and boys in the affected region (Western Nepal). The visual aspect of this project is dominated by photo collage, using hand-crafted elements on the digital interface.

Preview of Subsequent Chapters

The following chapter covers story writing, illustration, and book design. Writing stories about a girl growing up and discovering menstruation is an important part of this chapter.

Unlike my personal experience (coming from an urban setting), the story I wrote for the book design represents a rural setting where people follow ‘Chhaupadi’ custom.

Explorations using several visual elements and connecting them to the visual narrative of the storybook led to the design of multiple versions of the same story. Thus, the target audience is divided into two distinct categories. The children’s book version is aimed at young girls and boys ranging from age group ten and above in western Nepal. The second target audience is the general public, older than eighteen years of age.

The third chapter pertains to several visual studies and explorations resulting in a series of poster designs. The content of the posters is an introduction to the custom ‘Chhaupadi’ and its consequences. The first objective of this project is to explore mixed media tools/materials, using hand-crafted techniques along with digitally produced/manipulated typography. The second objective of this project is to bring the subject ‘Chhaupadi’ to light by sharing it with the target audience.

The fourth chapter is a motion graphics project. The motion design is targeted to the secondary audience; general public, older than eighteen years of age. The main content of this chapter is a list of freedom quotes extracted from a New York Times documentary published in 2019. This project pairs the visual narrative with audio to enhance the sensory experience, which can help connect with the subject matter more intimately.

The fifth chapter covers website design. I designed the website for the secondary target audience (general public, eighteen years and above) intending to introduce the topic 'Chhaupadi' custom and its consequences, along with the other functions that allow people to donate or buy art books and artworks based on menstruation.

CHAPTER II

STORYWRITING AND BOOK DESIGN

This chapter focuses on two sets of story books ‘Mina’s Flow-I’ and ‘Mina’s Flow-II’; one set (children’s version) to be handed out to young boys and girls in Western Nepal and another set (artbook version) to be sold to the secondary target audience to raise funds that will be used to distribute the children’s books to the primary audience. The process of designing these story books benefits from research concerning visual storytelling, visual semantics, attention units, and Wally Wood’s Panels. This research guided the process of illustration of the story books’ characters and plot lines underpinning the visual narrative in the story books. The visual narrative of the storybook is an important aspect of this project as the imageries/visuals carry the power of the communication of the story to a wider range of audience. Printmaking and acrylic on paper are the two mediums used to draw/paint the characters and storyline, which is also discussed in this chapter. It then extends to the study of visual influence, and printmaking, including the methodologies used for the presentation of the final design.

Background Study of Visual Narrative:

This section covers the four aspects of background important to my story book project including visual storytelling, visual semantics, attention units, and Wally Wood's Panel.

Visual Storytelling. The earliest form of visual narrative might be seen in the depiction of bison hunting in the pre-historic caves dating back to paleolithic period, which might probably be the earliest form of visual narrative. Even after thousands of years we don't need any language to understand the picture story. The visual narrative or picture-story is used in the story books, *Mina's flow*, which focuses on the aspect of communication of message that can serve both practiced readers and those with minimum reading skills. Egyptian hieroglyphics (Figure 2), Gothic manuscripts and intricate stone and wood carvings of holy scriptures in eastern culture are some examples of the historical presence of visual storytelling (Hoff, 20-23). Pictographs were the basis of present- day alphabets in many languages. Later to enhance the level of understanding and to improve the amount of information to be shared, the combined use of words and pictures were developed by people (Hoff, 20-23). Correspondingly, the visuals (illustrations) used in the storybooks '*Mina's Flow*' are paired with the body text/words. Therefore, both the visuals and the type are aiding each other for successful communication of the storyline. In the article '*The Visual Narrative: Kids, Comic Books, and Creativity*' by Gary R. Hoff, (Hoff), Rudolphe Topffer said-

The picture-story, which rarely worries the learned has always exercised a great appeal. More indeed than literature itself, for it (the visual narrative) appeals particularly to the children and the masses. With its dual advantages of greater conciseness and greater relative clarity, the picture-story, all things being equal,

should squeeze out the other (literature) because it would address itself with greater liveliness to a greater number of minds, and also because in any contest he who uses such a direct method will have the advantage over those who talk in chapters. (20)

The storybooks ‘Mina’s Flow’, therefore embraces this idea of using visuals along with text narrative to reach the target audience, particularly children. The visuals and the text aid each other to communicate the message.



Figure 2 Egyptian hieroglyphics

Visual Semantics. Similar to spoken language, visual language is composed of several lexical items forming meaningful units and constructions. Even though the visual language (VL-visual language) has not been directly equated with the verbal constructs of ‘word’ or ‘morpheme’, the visual lexical items can also be symbolic, iconic, or indexical.

The composition and arrangement of visual entities are usually sequential and occasionally non-sequential. Both the sequential and non-sequential modalities can be arranged with a text-image relationship (Cohn, 35-56). In the story books 'Mina's flow' the visual language follows sequential order in articulating the storyline and it sometimes uses indexical representation based on the particular event/plot of the story's narrative to express it visually.

Ray Jackendoff, an American linguist- hypothesizes the three structural features for 'language' in his book '*Meaning and the Lexicon: The Parallel Architecture*' namely: modality, concepts, and syntax (Jackendoff). In case of visual language, 'photological structures' accounts for the modality component, that helps in the construction of visual representations as opposed to verbal representations. There are various levels of arrangements of visual entities forming meaningful unit or combinations that makes it equivalent to syntax. Only observable semantic components and their spatial relations form this 'visual grammar', and they are not rule-bound (36). The arrangement of individual modality components in a single spread is distributed throughout the story book 'Mina's Flow', with the reader viewing them one at a time in sequential order deciphers the gist of the overall story.

Attention Units. A 'panel' or 'frame' is the most basic unit of representation in visual language serving as the primary components of a sequence (Figure 3). Panels direct the attention of readers to a particular element of the sequence. I have used several kinds of panels for the visual narrative of storybooks 'Mina's Flow.' Positive and negative entities are present within a panel. The figures are the positive or active elements that become the

‘grammatical entities’, and they depict the action or event whereas the background information are the negative or passive elements of a panel.
















		BASE	FRAMING	
			DIVISIONAL	INCLUSIONARY
ACTIVE	Polymorphic			
	Macro			
	Mono			
	Micro			
PASSIVE	Amorphous			

Figure 3 Attention Units Categorized

The panels are divided into hierarchy of categories based on the depiction of positively charged entities. This categorization is called ‘Lexical Representational matrix’ (LRM) (39). Following are the different panels in lexical representational matrix sections-

a. Polymorphic Panel:

Polymorphic panels are on the highest level of active tier, featuring an event representation within a single frame.

b. Macro Panel:

This panel consist of more than one entity and focuses the attention on larger displays.

c. Mono Panel:

Below the Macro, Monos feature only one entity focusing precisely on the action or situation depicted by that single entity.

d. Micro Panel:

Micro panel located at the bottom of active tier showcase 'close ups' or less than one entity.

e. Amorphic Panel:

Amorphic panel lies in the passive tier and therefore does not have any active entity. These are either animate objects or environmental features depending upon the sequence's context.

Single image is divided into image constant parts in the divisional panels whereas the inclusionary panel uses another frame within a frame. The inclusionary panels using an inner frame highlights the specific object or action, and they are also termed as 'windowing of attention' (40). The use of inclusionary panels has been adapted for all the visuals in the storybooks 'Mina's Flow', that showcased all varieties of polymorphic, macro, mono, micro and amorphic panels based on the story's events. These panels blended/adapted in the storybooks to illustrate the visual narrative is a guideline that helps in effective communication of the storyline.

Wally Wood's Panels. The twenty-two panels by Wally Wood is a very good example of panel compositions that feature wide range of visual representations including different perspectives, sizes and poses (Figure 4). Even though the scale varies in each panel the overall line composition and quality has uniformity and consistency. As stated by Neil Cohn in the article '*A Visual Lexicon*'-

The paneled visual languages exhibit a similar method of chunking information into workable units rather than letting meaningful information stand alone as units onto themselves' (40).

It is evident that the sequential representation with several levels of stresses on separate panels can successfully convey the intended meaning while narrating a story. The study of Wally Wood's Panels, helped for the idea sketching and planning out the visual narrative of storybooks 'Mina's Flow.' Idea sketching is an important aspect before actually rendering the visuals using specific tools such as printmaking.

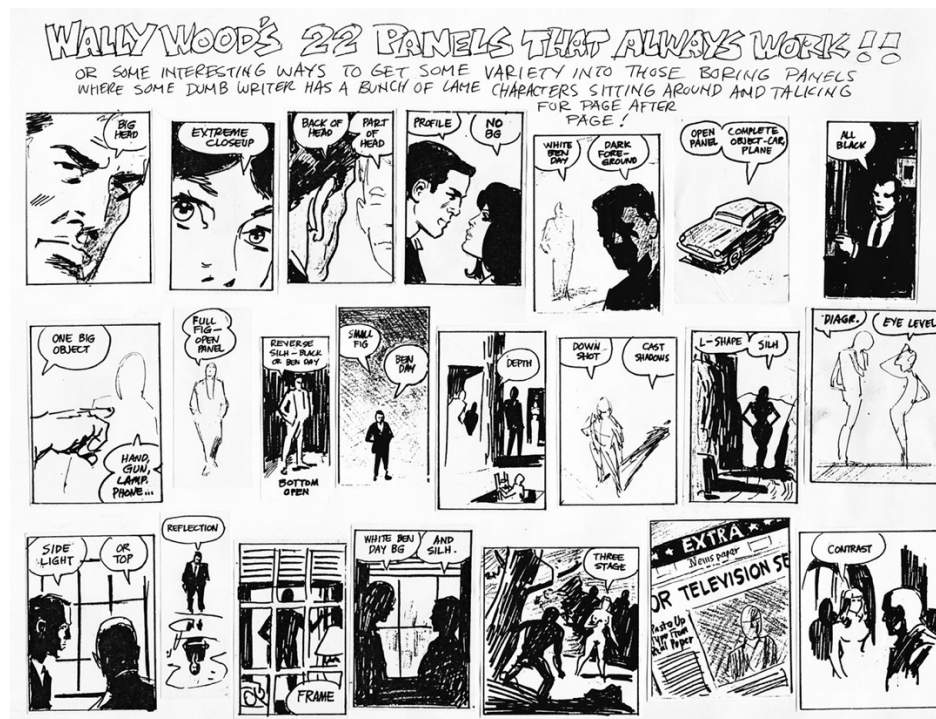


Figure 4 Wally Wood's Panel

Printmaking

Printmaking is one of the tools I have used for the illustration of the story's plot of books 'Mina's Flow.' This version of the storybooks is aimed towards the secondary audience (adults eighteen years and above), and will be available to buy online through the website

(which is one of the thesis project). Following is a brief history of printmaking focused on linoleum cut printmaking.

The history of printmaking in the East dates back to 175 A.D., however, in the Western world it dates back to the fifteenth century i.e., sometimes before the invention of printing by moveable type. The reproducible and inexpensive factors of the print made it popular and were extensively used for illustrated books, newspapers, broadsheets, journals, and periodicals, etc (Eppink). Linoleum cut prints is a form of relief printing very similar to woodcut. The slightly textured linoleum blocks are easy to carve and can easily print large areas of solid color, unlike woodcuts. The ease of carving without compromising the visual rendering quality of linoleum print is the reason I have selected it as one of the tools for the visual storytelling of Mina's Flow. The linoleum block prints were popularized after Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse created the lino-prints in the 1950s, even though it was introduced at the beginning of the 20th century. In Susan Tallman's words- 'What remained clearly visible were the tantalizing negotiations between human will, the human hand, and the tractable material upon which they work.'(Tallman) This statement towards the print works of several artists including Chuck Close and Vija Clemins stresses upon the relationship between the process of making and the maker that leaves a meticulous mark on the created artwork. The process of making defined as 'record of decisions having been made' by Chuck Close suggests the humanistic values achieved by hands on creation. This value rendered on the artwork sets itself apart from other mechanically driven creations (Tallman).

Visual Influence

Several visual approaches have been explored to illustrate the book 'Mina's Flow'. The character illustration is influenced by Mithila Art. The following section covers the detail study of Mithila Art and how it relates to the visual illustration used in this project.

Mithila Art. Mithila art originates from the country Mithila. It is also termed as Madhubani Art. Geographically, Mithila is comprised of North Bihar India and South East of Nepal. The people from Mithila are called Maithili.

Maithili women regardless of their age or caste, make art as part of ritual practices especially on occasions such as marriage (Figure 5), childbirth or festivals like Holi (Festival of colors) and Deepawali (Festival of Lights). 'Menarche' is also an important biological event in a girl's life that marks her healthy growth and introduces her to puberty. I therefore embraced the Mithila art style to represent the visual narrative of storybooks 'Mina's flow.'

Maithili women paint the indoor and outdoor mud walls of huts and front yard floor using colors extracted from nature such as turmeric for yellow, rice powder for white and vermillion for red. Traditionally, the art was painted by hands without using any tools such as a paintbrush. Girls grow up watching their mother, grandmother, relatives and neighbors create this art. The subject matter of art ranges from human figures, snake, fish, peacocks, lotus, bamboo plant, tools, lamps, mountain, rivers etc. Among them lotus motif is one of the important symbols as it represents female beauty and fertility. The art form is very simple and organic but the individuality of each figure makes it unique (Art of Mithila).



Figure 5 Maithili art depicting wedding scene

The fact that women and girls draw and paint (Figure 6) using organic tools and materials influenced me to hand draw the visual narrative of ‘Mina’s Flow.’ The hand-drawn illustrations are then transferred to linoleum sheets for hand carving and printmaking.



Figure 6 An elderly woman creating Maithili art

Methodology

Prior to designing story books for distribution by educators and social workers, I wrote narratives that captured the problem driving this thesis for use in the proposed story books. Story writing is the first step towards the creation of this project. Explorations and use of other elements pairing the illustrations with the typography is another crucial part of the story books design. The methodology therefore includes story writing (Mina's Flow-I and Mina's Flow-II), hand sketching and printmaking, explorations using taped (study: defamiliarizing with the use of tape), and type and layout, followed by the final book design.

Story Writing. 'Mina's Flow-I' and 'Mina's Flow-II' are two short stories that inform the storylines used in the story books. These stories portray a twelve-year-old girl and her journey of discovering adolescent growth and changes. The first story covers, Mina's discovery of the bitter reality behind her mother's isolation during menstruation and decides that she would study to become an advocate against Chhaupadi custom. The second story is the continuation of Mina's journey of becoming a nurse and working in her village for social causes including education and awareness on menstruation taboo. The character's name 'Mina' is adapted from a popular South Asian cartoon, The Meena Communication Initiative. This cartoon was developed in 1998 by UNICEF and has been translated in five languages: English, Hindi, Nepali, Bangla and Urdu. I grew up watching the adventures of fun spirited Meena as the cartoon sought to deliver a message on gender, child rights, education, protection and development.



Figure 7 A scene from Meena cartoon

Following is the narrative of two stories used for the storybook designs-

- a. Mina's Flow-I
- b. Mina's Flow-II

a. Mina's Flow-I

She will turn twelve next week, and she is excitingly waiting for that day. Her dad had promised her a gift. Both her parents love her so much since she is their only child and they had her after many years of their marriage. Mina is a very happy eleven-year-old girl from Himalayan village Accham. She studies in grade six. She is a smart kid and loves to go to school. Her school is thirty minutes away from her home.

(And this day, she goes to school thinking about what she will ask her dad for her birthday)

After the first class, her best friend Nilam was crying. Nilam told Mina that her skirt has some blood, and she has stomach cramp. They were both very scared. Mina had an idea; she ran to meet her health instructor Miss Karuna. Karuna has been teaching for three years in their village. She is from a town two hours away from the village.

Mina: Miss Karuna Miss Karuna...Nilam got some blood in her skirt and she is crying.

Karuna: Calm down Mina. Let me grab a menstrual pad for her. I will come with you, where is Nilam right now?

Mina: Nilam is in the classroom. What is a menstrual pad Miss Karuna?

Karuna: I will tell you all about it. Let's go.

(Both of them walk to the classroom. They take Nilam with them to the girls' bathroom.

Karuna tells both the girls that it is very normal, and they don't need to worry about it.

She also tells them that she will talk about Menstruation in their class the next day.)

At home Mina cannot stop thinking about what happened that day, and curiously she asks her mom what a menstrual pad is. But her mom just tells her to hush. Mina is very confused now; she can't wait to hear what miss Karuna would tell the class tomorrow.

(The next day at school, Nilam is absent. Mina worries about what happened to her friend.)

Miss Karuna teaches them all about female anatomy, menstruation and menstrual cycle. She also tells the class to not be shy about it. On top of that she distributes a story book that shows everything about what she taught in class.

At the end of the school day, she requests Miss Karuna if they could together go to Nilam's place, since she is so worried about her friend. Both of them walk to Nilam's house which is twenty minutes downhill from the school. Nilam's mother greet them at the front yard and tells them she won't be coming to school for next four days, and they cannot meet her since she is not home. Miss Karuna insisted on letting them know where Nilam is. They find out that Nilam is staying at a Chau goth located further downhill from her house. Both Karuna and Mina are shocked to see her cramping in a hut so far

away from home and so small that she can't even stretch properly inside it. Even though Mina was born and brought up in the same village, she had never seen someone living in a Chhau goth so closely like now. She just realizes that her mom had been going to live there once every month and always told her that she needs to live alone to become pure and would come back in five days. She was completely unaware that her mom was going through the same experience every month and was living in such a poor-conditions. Her heart swells up, and she can't stop her tears. That night she decides that she would talk to her family about what she learned at school and how it is very scary for a girl to live in an isolated hut when she is having her period. She promises herself that she will finish school no matter what, unlike other girls in her village who usually drop out of school once they are fourteen or fifteen years of age. She wants to become a teacher like Miss Karuna and teach other children in future.

It was not an easy task for her to convey the message that menstruation is a biological process, and it is actually a good sign for healthy growth of girls her age. She cannot frankly talk about it with her parents so she waits until her birthday, because she knew that they would listen to her and not scold her on that particular day.

On her birthday she opens up the topic about menstruation with her mom and dad by showing the beautiful book Miss Karuna gave her and the class for free. Her empathy towards her friend Nilam touched her dad's heart. He didn't want to send his little girl live in a dingy chau goth for any reasons. Mina requests her parents to let her live together in their home once she has her period and asks her dad to not send mom to the Chhau goth either. *(Mina grows up and becomes a Nurse instead. She was awarded a scholarship for her higher Studies.)*

b. Mina's Flow- II

It has been twelve years since Mina had her first period. She is twenty-four years old now. More importantly, she is a nurse in Accham Helath-post. Not just her parents but the whole village is proud of her accomplishment and service. Following her example, young girls in Mina's village go to school and talk about their dreams to become like 'Mina dd' (Mina Sister).

Besides her duty as a nurse, Mina also volunteers as a health instructor at her own school. She teaches young students about puberty, adolescence, menstruation, reproductive system and nutritional diet. Her school is still a two-hours walk from her village. After all those years the village still does not have a school nearby. Mina is writing to her friends and teachers about this situation to arrange enough fund and materials to build the first primary school in the village, since the young children cannot walk all the way to school in town.

Sadly, the villagers still follow the centuries old 'Chhaupdi custom', despite the fact that there had been an unrest against 'Chhaupadi Custom' in the region, resulting in the demolition of several Chhau huts by the activists. Even though there are controversy people are still not ready to change this custom. Mina believes that the major factor is the lack of education and awareness in certain regions. She advocates about the need of proper care, nutrition and hygiene during menstruation. She has barely been able to convince a couple of her neighbors and relatives to stop sending girls and women to live under tents and in caves after the demolition of Chhau huts. The persuasive reason which convinced them was the unfortunate events that lead to loss of multiple lives of young

girls and women in past one year. At that time of their passing these women were living in Chhau huts during their menstrual cycle.

Mina strives to educate her fellow villagers about healthy lifestyle that she got opportunity to learn during her study in Kathmandu. She has applied for some incentives from an INGO to provide for school dress, lunches and school supplies, to encourage both students and parents. Her further plan includes starting an adult literacy program together with her friends who teach at the same school she is volunteering. She is full of hope and expectations when it comes to the future of her village. She believed in her dreams when she was twelve years old and is living it right now. There is full possibility that her new dreams can come true.

Hand Sketching and Printmaking. The next step after the story writing is illustrating the narrative for the book design. I began making idea sketches (Figure 5) and planned out a list of specific events and situations in order to visually narrate them. The hand drawn sketches are then traced on top of linoleum blocks for hand carving purposes. Each illustration is then carefully carved for printmaking.

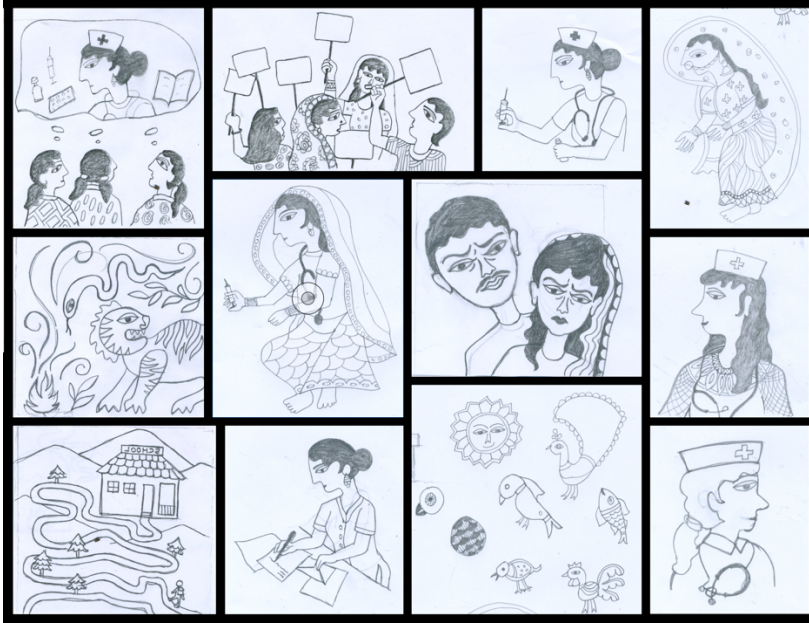


Figure 8 Hand drawn illustrations influenced by Mithila art

I chose printmaking process over other illustration techniques due to following reasons: Taking into consideration the very human nature of the subject ‘Menstruation’, the biology of female body and the humanistic value achieved by hand carving is a quality that digital drawings rarely reflect. The process involved in making a hand-carved print involves time and labor. It allowed some space for thoughts and led me to think about the time spent by girls and women in those enclosed huts. I have deliberately carved the illustrations in a small square or rectangular box (Figure 9) to represent the idea of girls having to live in an enclosed tiny space with less room to even stretch their legs. The use of different panels such as polymorphic panel, macro panel, mono panel, micro panel and amorphic panel are taken into consideration for effective storytelling (Figure 10/11).

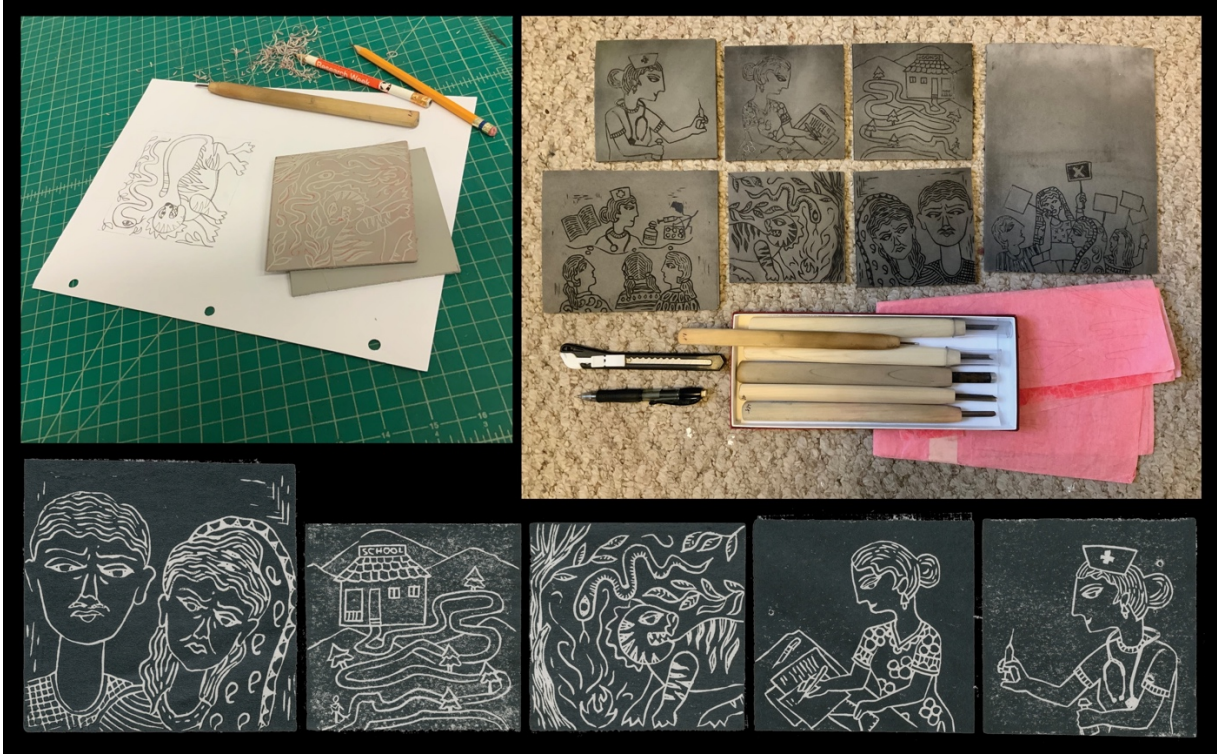


Figure 9 Printmaking process and results



Figure 10 Illustration showing close-up/Micro Panel



Figure 11 Illustration showing and event/Macro Panel

That idea of tight and narrow space has also been carried in further making and exploration in the design of typographic compositions for the storybook. One of the significant materials explored and used alongside the illustrations in the book spreads of ‘Mina’s Flow’ is different kinds of tapes. Paper tapes and Washi tapes are used predominantly throughout the spreads of artbook versions of the book.

Explorations using Tapes. Washi Tapes are Japanese tapes made out of special paper for decorative purposes. The term itself is made up of a combination of Wa and Shi; ‘Wa’ meaning Japanese and ‘Shi’ meaning paper. These are different than regular paper tapes or deco tapes made of plastic (Edghill). The washi tape chosen for exploration and use in the design is a set of pink-colored tape with varieties of minimal pattern-designs (Figure 12).



Figure 12 Washi tape and paper tape creating boxes

I particularly chose some tapes with circular dots in some of them. Relating the circular dots in the tapes with droplets and the moon, symbolically representing the blood drops and the myth around the globe based on the syncing of the menstrual cycle with the lunar cycle(Lipton et al.). The subtle pink tint of the tape is also representational of the crimson red color of blood. The use of washi tape and paper is recontextualized in the storybooks ‘Mina’s Flow’ by using them as bounding boxes for type (the written narrative of the story). The tapes also serve as an element of visual aesthetics. The following study discusses defamiliarizing with the use of tape as an element of visual aesthetic with reinterpreted meaning to its use.

Study: Defamiliarizing with the use of Tape. According to the Merriam-webster dictionary the definition of defamiliarize is ‘to present or render in an unfamiliar artistic form usually to stimulate fresh perception’. Honing-in the idea that menstruating girls and women are supposed to be hidden but they cannot be held secret to the world, I started using masking tapes over the cut-out piece of the printed story ‘Mina’s Flow’. Masking tape is a medium that is temporary and vulnerable in its use, it partially hides

the text when applied on top, but cannot conceal it properly. The tape is a metaphor to the unsafe and temporary nature of the shelter where girls are supposed to live in.

Adding up to the exploration, I added some masking tape on the back of shoes and went out for a couple of hours (Figure 13). The wear and tear, the dirt, and folds collected in these tapes gave them a unique texture. These newly formed texture and ephemeral qualities somehow align with the experiences made by girls and women each time they walk to their 'hiding place'? The walk of shame? Building on the idea with the use of

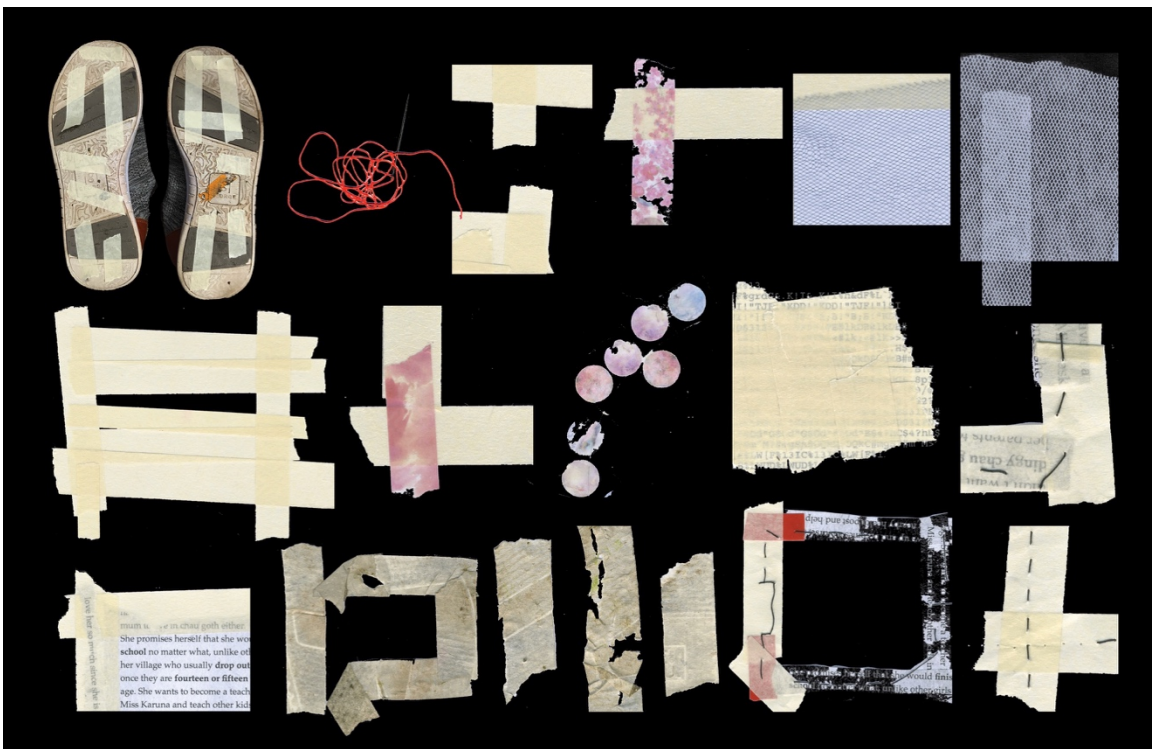


Figure 13 Multiple ways of use of tapes

different varieties of tapes and completely defamiliarizing with its use by imploring methods such as tearing them apart, walking on them and gluing them back, using wide ranges of glue to get creases and folds, sewing on top of them eventually created multiple layers, the layers thus created are unorganized and involves tactile handling of the materials. These layers impart a visual texture resembling innumerable stories.

Each illustration is confined to a somewhat square box-like composition, which is being reflected by the boxed-up spaces created by the use of tapes (Figure 14). The guiding idea behind the composition is the fact how menstruating girls live in very confined, small huts. The taped spaces that enclose the type in many compositions are all made of the same material but they are unique in composition; these tapes also represent the common biology of the female body but experienced differently by the individual woman. Type and layout is another aspect of visual design of the storybooks 'Mina's flow', which is discussed in the following section.

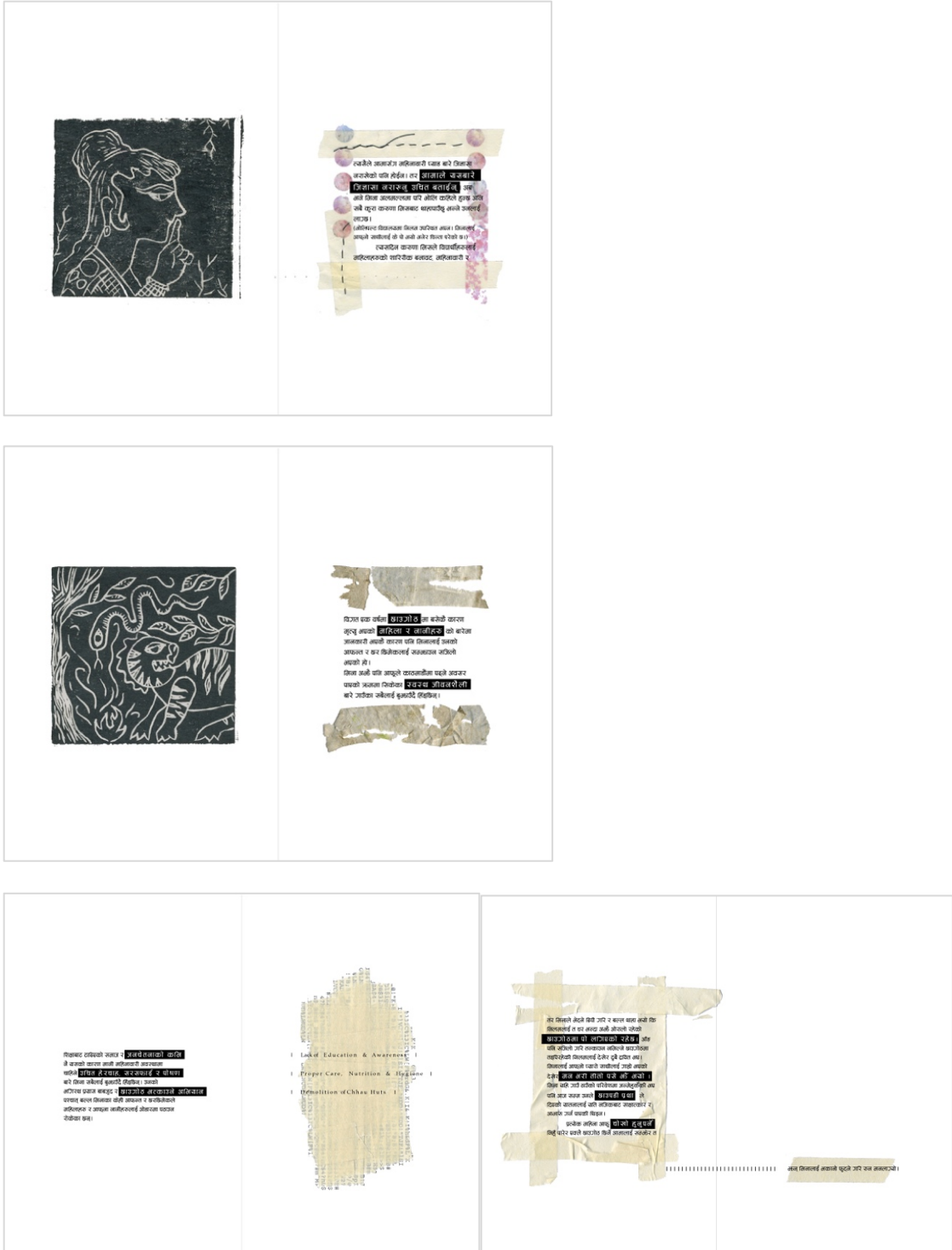


Figure 14 Book spreads showing the juxtaposition of illustrations and typography along with tapes

Type and Layout. In the book titled *'It is beautiful, then gone'*, the author Martin Venezky said-

Type could be more than just text. It could become structure and decoration. Nevertheless, the design had to be confident, strong, and playful without overpowering the text or the artwork. To do this, I had to develop a flexible design vocabulary- one that could speak in all volumes, from shout to whisper. (60)

In agreement with this statement by Venezky, the type design and layout in the storybooks *'Mina's Flow'*, involved careful considerations. Keeping in mind the requirement of high legibility and balance between the illustration and additional component i.e., tape, the simple added feature to highlight the key points of the stories are boxes behind the text. Some of the type is set on black boxes while some on outlined white ones (Figure 15). Once again, the representation of confined and narrow space of dwelling for menstruating girls is characterized by the boxed-up type.

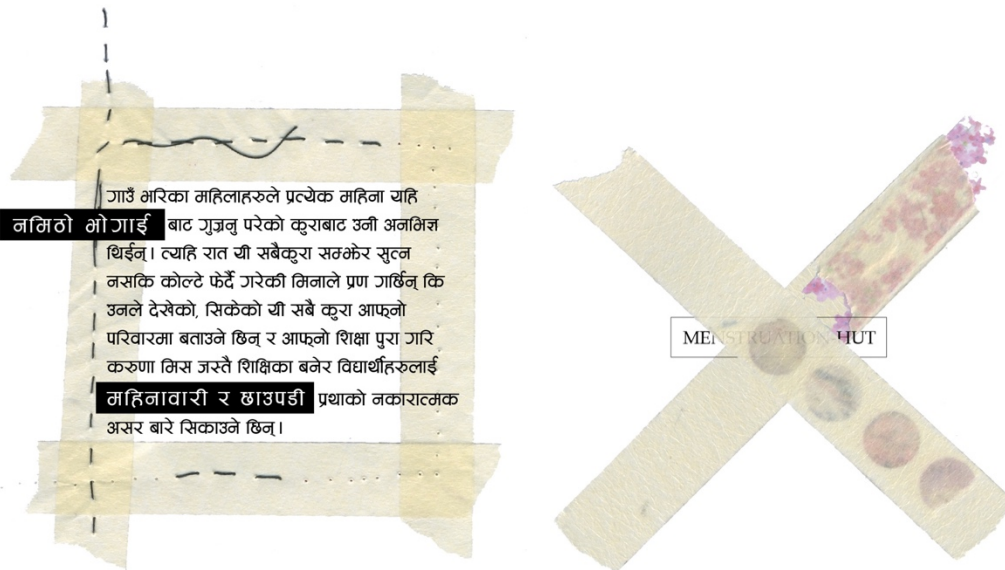


Figure 15 Use of tape and boxed up type

Apart from the printmaking illustrations paired to multiple mixed use of tape, the exploration and making of yet another version of the same stories were continued as part of the project, story writing and book design. The children's version of the book designed for the primary target audience (girls and boys from Western Nepal), is designed considering higher legibility for the age group of ten years and above. Colorful illustrations of the same drawings used for printmaking has been added alongside the boxes filled with type. Following are some spreads from the colorful version of Mina's Flow (Figure 16).



Figure 16 Colored version of book spreads

Final Book Design

The final design of Mina's Flow-I and Mina's Flow-II is a collection of multiple versions including children's book version and artbook version, targeted for primary audience (young girls and boys from Western Nepal) and secondary audience (general public above 18 years of age) respectively. Following are the categories of final storybooks:

- a. Two artbooks in Nepali
- b. Two artbooks in English

(The artbooks will be available on the website 'Chokho' for the target audience to access and buy)

- c. Two children's book in Nepali

After the completion of this project 'Story Writing and Book Design' it is followed by the second project 'Collage Poster Series.' The following chapter discusses the studies and making of collage posters.

CHAPTER III

COLLAGE POSTER SERIES

This chapter covers a brief history of collage making, establishing visual influences that inspired the making process of my final collage poster series. These collage posters inform the secondary audience (general public, 18 years and above) about the thesis topic ‘Chhaupadi’ custom and its consequences. These posters were displayed during the thesis show.

History of Collage: The Collage Narrative

The word collage is derived from the French word ‘coller’ meaning to stick (Beaney). Historically the collaborative explorations done by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque are still prominent because of their inclusive nature towards wide range of materials. In a similar manner, I am embracing the use of multiple materials in building the collage posters. In modern Western art, Picasso’s ‘Still Life with Chair Caning’ (1912) (Figure 17) is marked as the first collage work (Taylor). This small oval work is a mixture of a pasted piece of simulated chair caning made of oilcloth and painted flat objects on top, along with the letters ‘JOU’. A rope border outside the canvas provides the finishing touch to this

work, almost representing a ‘plan view’ (view of an object as seen from above) of a table-top tableau. My current project, a collage poster series, adapts the idea of combining several objects along with typography with the goal of communicating the definition and consequences of ‘Chhaupadi’ custom.



Figure 17 Picasso's still life with chair-caning, 1912

The narrative of collage has been evolving in the recent times along with evolution in media, genre and art-ideas. The bricolage nature of collage has come to be embraced in multiple genres including cinema, photomontage, posters, installation art, performance art, and video art (Garoian). The collage poster series project embraces this bricolage aspect of collage making to convey the specific message to its specific audience.

In the book titled ‘Graphic Assembly’, collage making is explored experimentally in Architectural practice. Craig Buckley the author of Graphic Assembly, states- ‘In this new pedagogical assemblage, collage assumed a new function; visual and semantic analysis’(Buckley). The rich visual essence of collage along with the semantic implications are crucial characters that help in building a rich narrative. This project

employs collage making in a series of typographic posters with a narrative that communicates the meaning and consequences of the ‘Chhaupadi’ custom.

Visual Influences: Gökçen Ataman and Jesus Barbeito

Discovering works of artists like Gökçen Ataman and Jesus Barbeito (Tanyer), encouraged me to experiment with a wide range of materials, especially ‘found-objects’ in making of the collage poster series. These ‘found-objects’ can include a range of materials like pieces of paper and cardboard, fabric materials, burlap, and saw-dust. Jesus Barbeito’s works are a mixture of collage, painting and recycling (Figure 18). His making process involves tearing and sewing fabrics, applying thick pigments of paint, using multiple layers of paper, burlap, fabric and cardboard on canvas. The coarse texture present in his works have very noticeable shapes, giving them tactile qualities and presence of three dimensionality without compromising the two-dimensionality of a painting.

Gökçen Ataman Tanyer is a visual artist from Turkey. She uses cardboard and wood fiber as primary elements in her collage works (Figure 19). Her works are very process driven and based on a sustainable approach by using waste as artistic medium. She investigates aesthetics of cities and criticizes the increasing devaluation of both form and function in urban architecture in contemporary time (Tanyer).



Figure 18 Peces de Matisse and La Reina. The Queen by Barbeito

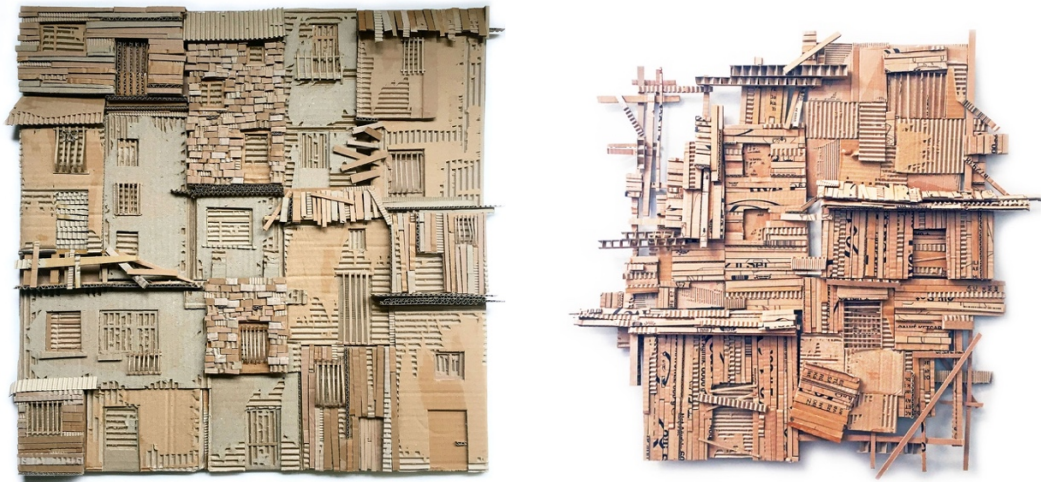


Figure 19 Untitled, 2020/2021 by Gökçen Ataman

Both the artists Barbeito and Ataman focus on the idea of using found objects, recycling and recontextualizing the collected content to build a new visual narrative. My project, borrows the idea of using found objects and reinterprets their meaning, adapting

them to the subject 'Chhaupadi' custom, and the experiences of girls and women having to live in the mercy of discarded materials such as cardboard, burlaps, and hay. Barbeito and Ataman's works also involve a great deal of handcrafting and the textures obtained by doing so, makes the viewers want to touch and feel the work. I am drawn to try these methods and add my own materials and method to them because I want the audience of this project to be able to connect with the human experience by touching and feeling the rough surface of these posters. The audience's empathetic understanding of the severe conditions of girls and women during their period will encourage the viewers to contribute and help solve the problem which is following 'Chhaupadi' custom. The found objects I am referring to and using in this project include misprinted type on copy paper piled up for recycling, discarded cardboards, old burlap pieces, and unwanted tracing papers. The humble nature of these works suits my own idea of making the design more humanistic instead of polished digital visuals. I started exploring and did some studies to build up the visual vocabulary for the final series of collage posters. More specifically, I have employed two distinct methods, namely, watercolor collage and cardboard collage which will be described briefly as follows.

Methodology

Study 1: Watercolor Collage. In this study, watercolor is a representational medium to symbolize the flow of blood during menstruation. The use of watercolor not only adds fluidity to these works, but its juxtaposition with typography and hand-stitching also adds unique texture to the overall look and feel of the composition.

The misprinted type (Figure 20) in this case is a representation of the treatment of menstruation as a mistake and not a biological phenomenon. Carefully selected words

and quotes are printed in several fonts and point sizes for hierarchy of scale in composition. Hand sewing is an additional layer added on top of the composition. The stitching serves to connect either different words or to make outlines and borders around the composition. This tactile work of stitching/sewing signifies the stitching of stories. Once again, the idea of confining the composition in a square box has been adopted, except for some compositions that tend to break out of the box (Figure 21).



Figure 20 Misprinted type on copy paper and watercolor tube



Figure 21 Collage Studies with watercolor

Adding on to the studies using multiple materials and methods, the final series of collage poster is built on cardboard. The surface peeling of the top layer of cardboard is precisely used in construction of letterforms (Figure 24).



Figure 23 Surface peeling of letterforms on cardboard

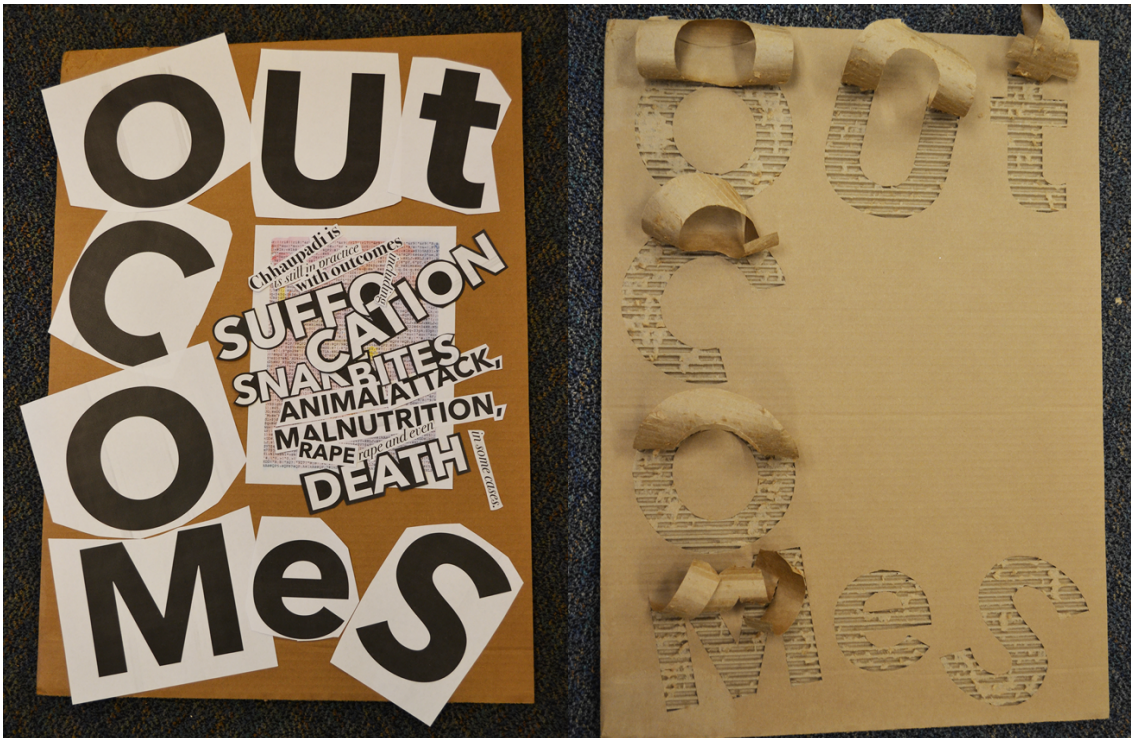


Figure 24 Peeled off word juxtaposed with papercut type composition

There are total of four final collage posters (Figure 25), informing the audience about the facts of custom 'Chhaupadi', why it is still being followed and the outcomes.

The peeled off alphabets from the surface of the cardboard is acting as the keyword of the individual poster, which is paired with typographic collage composed out of paper cut outs. The visual hierarchy of scale posed by the large format peeled out letterforms is something that draws the attention of the viewers and pulls them in to find out more about it. It also adds up the tangible and physical nature of hand-made work that is hard to achieve with the use of digital tools alone.

The first poster 'Banished' states 'Menstruating girls and women are banished for five days every month.' The second poster 'Custom' defines the meaning of 'Chhaupadi' custom, which is the cause/reason behind the banishment of menstruating girls and women. The third poster 'Impure' follows the second one and elaborates on the reason why this custom is being followed. The final poster 'Outcomes' states the consequences of following this custom. It states- 'Chhaupadi is still in practice with outcomes including suffocation, snakebites, animal attack, malnutrition, rape and even death in some cases.' These collage series were part of the thesis show, informing and communicating the meaning of this particular custom 'Chhaupadi' to the audience. This chapter 'Collage Poster Series' is followed by another chapter 'Motion Graphics' that discusses the background, methods and making of the project entitled 'Freedom at all times.'

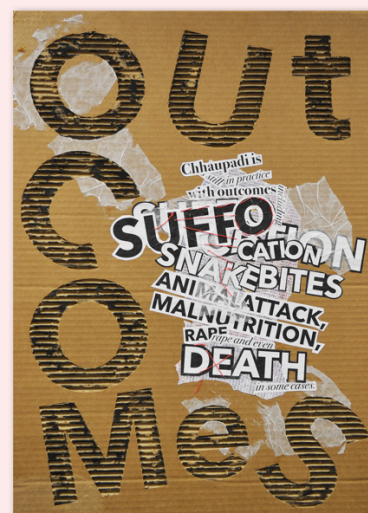
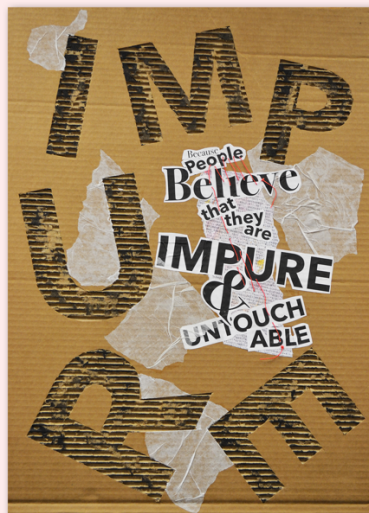
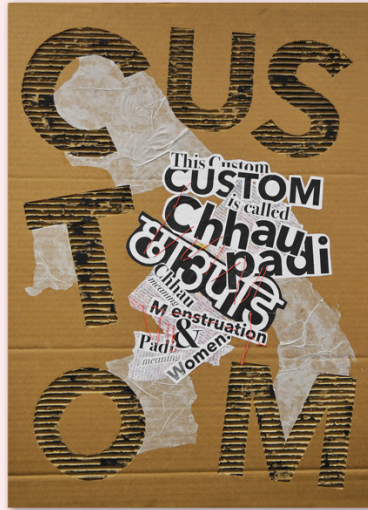


Figure 25 Final collage poster series (1-4)

CHAPTER IV

MOTION GRAPHICS

This chapter focuses on the motion graphics project titled ‘Freedom at all times.’ The content of this project is the voice of young girls from Western Nepal speaking up for their rights during menstruation. This project pairs audio and visual together to engage the viewers with the added sensory experience. The target audience for this project is adults above eighteen years of age. The influence of historical evidence of moving sequences is discussed in this chapter followed by the methodology: researching content and stop-motion animation methods used to design the motion graphics.

Influence of historical evidence of moving sequences

The ancient images of horses and other animals painted in sequence in Lascaux caves in France suggest the earliest evidence of animated movement (Figure 26). These ancient drawings date back to 15,000 BCE (Furniss). The ancient people keeping a record of their hunt is a way to remember the event (imprinting something in memories of someone). My motion graphics project intends to leave a mark in the audience’s memory about the innocent voices of young girls subjected to follow ‘Chhaupadi’ custom. Throughout history along with the development of several tools and techniques, several factors have influenced

the evolution of animation including technological, scientific, aesthetic, cultural, industrial, and personal factors. This chapter focuses on the stop-motion animation method used to create motion graphics for the content used from a New York Times documentary about Chhaupadi custom.



Figure 26 Lascaux cave, France, Prehistoric Paintings, 15,000 BCE

Both the terms, “motion graphic” and “animation,” are sometimes used without much distinction since there is not any hard and fast rule that separates them (Ellis). Animation covers any technique that makes static images or objects move. Animation is a broader umbrella with subcategories such as 2D animation, stop-motion, and 3D animation (interchangeably used for CGI; computer-generated imagery) (Furniss). While motion graphics uses graphic design tools for the creation of movement, it enhances the meaning of specific content (Furniss). In other words, motion graphics can be understood as graphic design in motion that helps to illustrate a point of view and engages the viewer while delivering the message. Motion graphics might embrace several techniques and tools for the making process. The project ‘Freedom at all times’ uses stop-motion animation as the primary tool for design. Typography is one crucial element that drives

motion graphics to communicate through letterforms, which is used in the project 'Freedom at all times' in form of hand-written words that supplement the audio message.

Methodology Used:

Specific methodologies have been used to create my motion graphics project involving the research I did, and the tool used (stop motion animation) to create the motion piece. The stop motion animation method helped creating the content for presentation in motion to establish the sequence.

Researching Content. I read and researched articles and watched documentaries and interviews, in order to come up with the content for motion graphics. After stating the definition and consequences of the 'Chhaupadi' custom to inform the viewers about the problems caused by following this custom through the collage poster series. The next step was to share with the targeted audience something more interactive and engaging. The subject matter 'Chhaupadi' custom is very sad and depressing.

Therefore, I decided to use the content from a New York Times (NYT) documentary published in 2019 (Times) that has a hopeful note to it. The documentary was produced by Cheryl Strayed and Brian Lindstrom along with a New York Times article titled- 'I am not untouchable. I just have my period'(Strayed). I have used a small section from the documentary that focuses on the expectations of young girls for their freedom during menstruation. Following are the list of five quotes used from the documentary:

1. I want girls to be free of shame and fear during Menstruation.
2. I want girls to be free of superstitious beliefs that isolate and humiliate them.
3. I want girls to have access to sanitary napkins and nutritious foods.

4. I want girls to be able to live in all the rooms of their home.
5. I want girls of future generations to have their freedom at all times.

The audio-visual design aims for an enhanced experience for the audience. The sensory experience of listening to the words spoken by young girls is coupled with hand-written words and close-up photographs (portraits) of adolescent girls. The combination of listening to the girl's words coupled with seeing photographs and words in stop-motion underpins the design of the motion graphics used in the project.

Stop-Motion Animation method. The process of photographing an object/objects sequentially by moving it in front of the camera is termed as stop-motion. In other words, stop-motion animation is a filmmaking technique where you photograph an object multiple times by moving it a little for each shot and playing the individual pictures in sequence (Priebe). I have used this method to create the motion graphics 'Freedom at all times.'

I hand wrote the freedom quotes taken from the NYT documentary using thinned black acrylic paint on copy paper. Each quote was written in a single 8.5" X11" paper. I trimmed those papers into multiple vertical bars using a craft knife. I printed the close-up portraits of adolescent girls from Nepal (8.5" X 11") (photographed by Mr. Sabin Shrestha). The vertical strips of papers with an individual quote were then laid out in order on top of an individual photograph of a girl. The next step was taking pictures of the set-up by removing the vertical bars in different orders to reveal/hide the underlying portrait of a girl (Figure 27). The photographs were then played in sequential order that created an illusion of motion leading the paper strips to move on their own, revealing the photograph beneath it. The steps were then repeated for each of the quotes.

The use of vertically trimmed papers with the quotes on them resembles ‘jail bars’, exposing the face of an innocent girl behind it is a symbolic representation of confinement of girls on their menstrual cycle. All the quotes playing/running in sequential order were then paired with the audio record simultaneously.

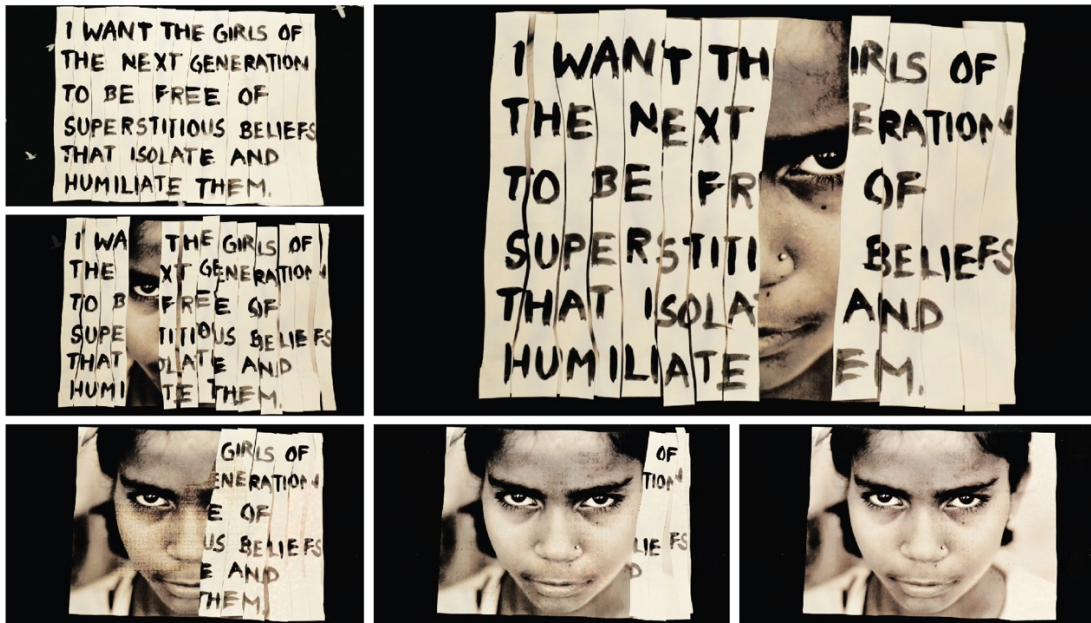


Figure 27 The vertical strips with words reveal and hiding a girl's face

The Final Design

The final motion graphics piece is a complete set of all the freedom quotes used from the NYT documentary, set in motion using the stop-motion animation method. This project is a platform to share the voices of adolescent girls speaking up for their desire and need of freedom from the menstruation taboo ‘Chhaupadi’ custom. It aims to intrigue an empathetic understanding among wider audiences (adults eighteen years and above). This project ‘Freedom at all times’ was showcased in the Gardiner Gallery of Art along with the other thesis projects. Apart from that, it will also be showcased in the online platform (Website) for ease of access.

CHAPTER V

WEBSITE DESIGN

This chapter focuses on the making of a website design titled ‘Chokho.’ This website design project is aimed towards the secondary audience (adults eighteen years and above) of the thesis. The chapter covers the basics and background of website design along with the influence- ‘Period Equity’, an existing website. The chapter covers the methodology underpinning the design before it reveals the final web design of the website, intended to serve the purpose of user interaction for fund raising and selling artworks online.

Website Design Background and Basics

Print design preceded the website design before the creation of first website in history attributed to computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee in 1990 (Hufford). The elements of print design such as headers, sidebars, footers, body text, and feature areas were borrowed and used in websites early on because the first web designers were trained print designers (Miller). Several innovations in technology and development of fast-paced internet has contributed to huge evolution in website design, with added attributes such as interactive imageries, online shopping and selling possibilities, and moving backgrounds/images.

These functions are made possible through multiple clicks, scrolling and filling-out forms directly on the digital platform (Miller). My website project for the thesis embraces the interactive functions of sharing experiences about menstruation, buying artworks such as collage and artbooks, and donating to help solve problems caused by 'Chhaupadi' custom. The project also uses the basic elements of web design including headers (also known as navigation bars), footers, body text and feature areas. Also basic to web design, the content on a webpage can be separated as pages, or long screens that scroll vertically up/down or horizontally left/right (Miller). Reading from left to right and top to bottom is the natural flow of navigation in Western culture and in several parts of eastern culture including Nepal. The website design project 'Chokho' applies a combination of vertical long scrolling screens along with the clicking ability to reach particular screens. The clicking function is provided by fixing the navigation bar on top of the screen, making it available for the users to access it anytime.

Another important aspect of the web-based design (website design) is good typography. Legibility, readability, flexibility and showmanship are crucial parts of the design (Lupton). The use of serif fonts (fonts that have lines attached to the end of each letter) are usually recommended for print based designs and sans-serif fonts (fonts devoid of lines attached to the end of each letter) for web-based design (Pearson). But it is very common to use a combination of both serif and sans-serif fonts on digital designs in current scenarios with the increasing access to large number of fonts online (Lupton). I have used a combination of two sans-serifed typefaces 'Roboto' and 'Din' for headings and body text respectively in the website project, considering legibility as major factor on

the website. Before actually starting the design process, I studied the functionality and visual interface design of some existing websites, including the following example.

Influence: Period Equity

Period Equity is a legal organization based in the USA, dedicated to fighting for menstrual equity. The organization works to ensure affordability, accessibility, and safe menstrual products. The branding, identity design, and website design for the organization 'Period Equity' was done by Pentagram, a leading design firm in the US. "Graphically the identity pulls no punches about a subject that still makes some people uncomfortable."- Pentagram. I have carefully selected the design aspects on my own website 'Chokho' to be more subtle without using any imagery or words that might make people uncomfortable. That is also reflected in the name of the website 'Chokho' meaning 'Pure' in the Nepali language. The navigation system used in Period Equity is simple with the navigation bar containing clickable buttons such as 'who we are', 'media', 'issues', 'book', 'resources', 'take action' and 'donate' accompanied by a search button (Figure 28). I have used a similar navigation bar based on the functions and requirements of the website 'Chokho'. Similar to the period equity website I have also used a combination of two sans-serif typefaces in the design, prioritizing legibility. I have followed specific steps in the design and making of the website, as articulated in the methodology section below.

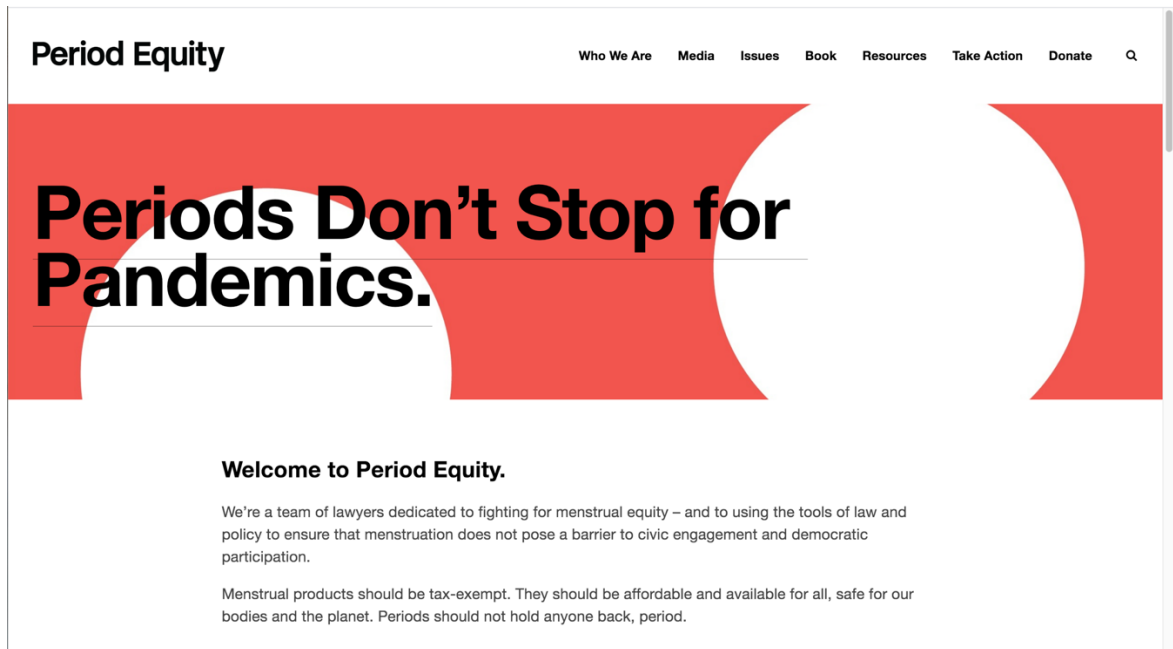


Figure 28 Period Equity website page

Methodology

Following are the specific steps used to design the Chokho website:

- a. Research
- b. Mind Mapping
- c. Idea Sketching
- d. Wireframing
- e. Testing the wireframes
- f. Digital Wireframing
- g. Mood board creation
- h. Visual content design/making
- i. Digital design
- j. Prototyping

I researched different steps and ways to design an interface for user experience/interaction on the web. Identifying the user functions was the next step which is guided by mind mapping. I started creating a list of pages/screens that will be included on the website by sketching a flow chart of the underlying architecture of the site, which is the mind mapping process (Figure 29). The ease of navigation on the user's end is an important aspect considered throughout the making process. Therefore, identifying the page functionality came next. Sometimes in order to facilitate use, multiple individual pages of the site were required. For example, to buy a particular artwork, it is necessary to click and navigate through two or three individual pages. The wireframing helped plan these ideas out by mocking them up on paper. The wireframing was rendered on paper cut layouts with hand drawn sketches on them. Only primary elements such as the header buttons and the titles of the pages were clearly represented while the secondary elements such as imagery and body text were just boxes and scribbles respectively (Figure 30).

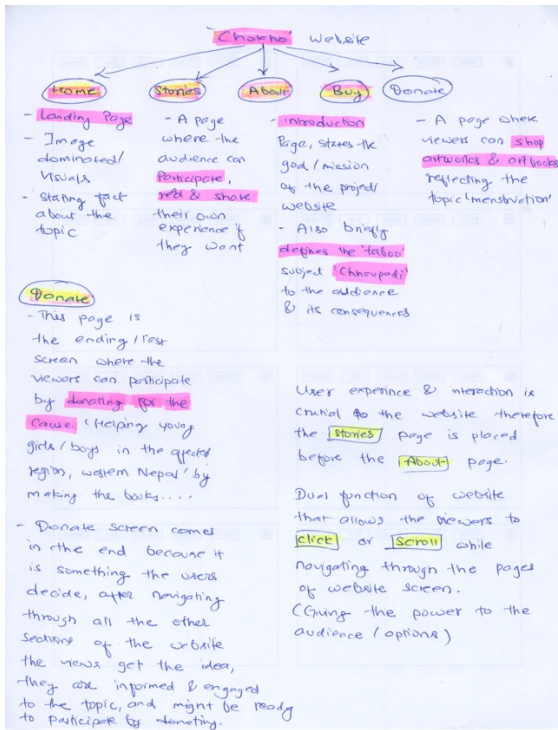


Figure 29 Mind Mapping for the website

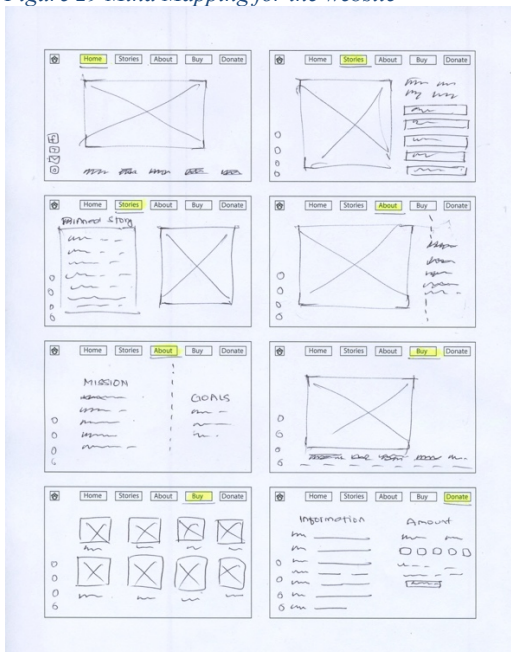


Figure 30 Wireframes drawn on paper

The wireframes were then used for user testing with a group of six peers. I kept track of how these peers interacted with each page and took notes for revision. The next

step after user testing was creation of digital wireframes that incorporated the changes and improvements based on collected feedbacks after the user testing. The digital version of wireframing also was very basic without using actual imagery and content in detail. This step helped me transition from paper to computer/screen. The planning and revisions through wireframes helped formulate a strong base for the actual website design. I also collected photographs and possible color palettes to reference during the design process, this collection is also termed as making 'mood board'. The mood board served as an archive, accessible for design inspiration, especially as visual references.

I have continued the use of a collage-making technique in this project including photographs that helped create the visual aesthetic of the website's design. These photo collages not only served as visual aesthetics alone, but also helped represent the particular content being presented on the particular screen. For example- the landing page (first page that is displayed when the viewer opens the website) showcases a photo collage of 'Chhaupadi' hut accompanied by a quote 'All woman in general menstruate for 1800 days in their lifetimes' (Figure 31), the 'donation' page showcases another photo collage with little hands joined together along with a quote by Anne Frank- 'No one has ever become poor by giving' (Figure 32). The visual aesthetic of the overall website is a combination of photo collages and typography linked together with 'dots' in the vertical and horizontal directions. These continuous dots are not just a design element that holds different screens/pages together, they are also symbolic representation of blood drops (Figure 33). A loose grid system serves as a guide to place different elements together, maintaining a good balance between the images, body text, quotations, and other visual aesthetics used. The final step after the interface design was the making of an interactive

prototype using Adobe-XD. This final prototype mimics the functions of the website such as clicking different tabs leading to particular pages and scrolling up and down on the screen.

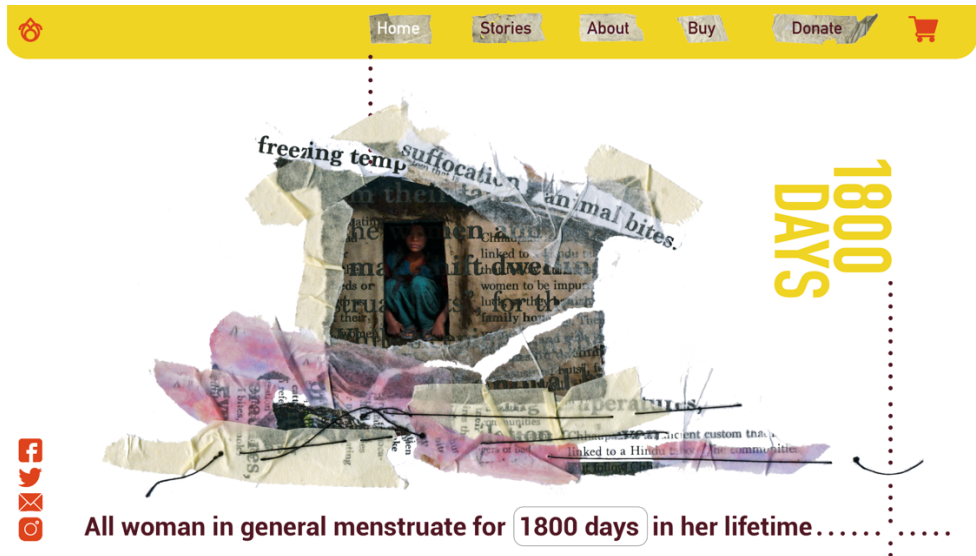


Figure 31 Landing Page of Website showcasing 'Chhaupadi' hut



Figure 32 The 'donation' page with planting hands and a quote



Figure 33 The website layout showing photo collage, typography and dots

Final Design

The final design is a result of several design iterations and prototyping, in order to improve the user experience and navigation. I will be designing/adapting the website to function on multiple electronic devices including apple and android phones, and iPad to

expand the audience circle as part of my research extension plan. I plan to launch the final website in near future for users to be able to interact and participate in it, reading and sharing their experiences about menstruation, buying artworks such as artbooks (Mina's Flow) and collage works, and donating to help solve the menstruation taboo problem 'Chhaupadi' custom.

CHAPTER VI

EXHIBITION

All the projects created as part of the thesis including the storybook's design, poster series, motion graphics, and website design were displayed at the Gardiner Gallery, located in Bartlett Center at Oklahoma State University. The visual studies done as part of the making process for specific projects were also included in the show next to the particular project in the display. The following floor plan of the gallery indicates a layout of display and the directional flow of visitors to view the exhibition (Figure 34).

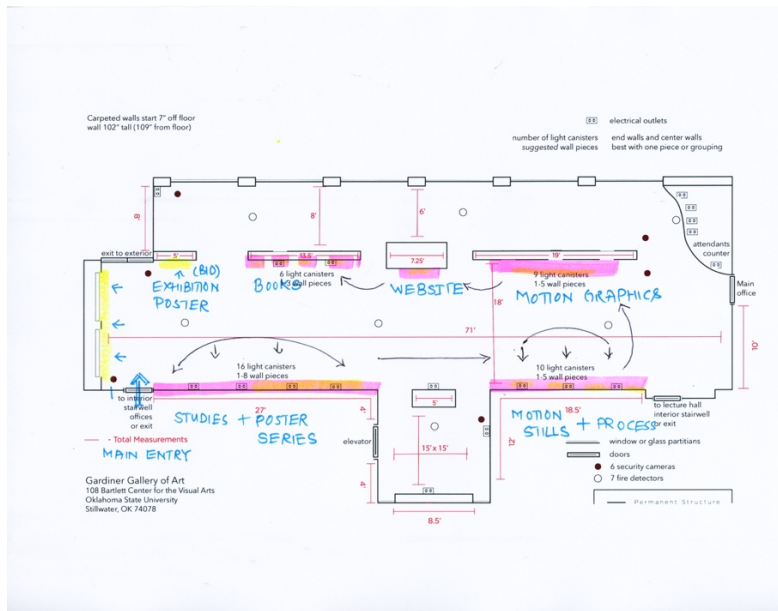


Figure 34 Gallery layout showing visitor's flow

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH GOALS

This thesis study created multiple projects to bring awareness on a menstruation taboo called 'Chhaupadi' custom, using design strategy. Exploring and experimenting with new mediums to expand the ongoing visual research and making towards the design of educational materials covering topics such as the biology of menstruation, menstrual hygiene, and nutritional requirements will be some other areas to be considered for the distribution package along with the storybooks project. The writing and design of storybooks are aimed to be distributed to the young girls and boys in the affected region (Western Nepal).

Collaboration with non-profit organizations carrying similar goals of bringing awareness on menstruation taboo is an area of consideration to expand the research. The collaborations, especially with local organizations in Nepal can facilitate the organization of awareness workshops about menstruation in local schools.

The creation of a responsive website 'Chokho', that can be accessed in multiple digital platforms is another objective of the thesis. The launching of this website will allow the secondary audience (general public, above eighteen years of age) to participate by donating funds and buying artbooks and artworks. The proceedings from the sale will be used to disseminate the storybooks and educational materials.

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