

A Case for Eco-Friendly Menstrual Products

TAZREEN JAHAN BARI

While menstruation itself is a natural process, the disposable products used to tackle it can have a long-lasting and detrimental impact on the environment. This is where eco-friendly menstrual products come in. Not only are they safer, more hygienic, sustainable, and reusable, but they also provide more comfort and ultimately save the total cost of menstruation management.

MENSTRUATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Although statistics vary, the general range suggests that people who menstruate use around 15,000 disposable period products in their lifetime. Around the world, the annual menstrual waste adds up to 100 billion disposables. The number of disposable pad users is on the rise in Bangladesh. Apart from convenience, the stigma associated with menstruation is also causing a rise in disposable usage, as they are more discreet than the reusable cloth pads used by the majority of menstruators.

The plastic packaging, individual plastic wraps each pad comes with and the leak proof layer all are made with non-biodegradable material that ends up in landfills and waste dumps, harming the environment for the next 500 to 800 years. Moreover, due to the stigma surrounding menstruation, some people find it easier to just flush their disposable sanitary napkins down the toilet than conducting a stealth mission to dispose of them without anyone else knowing. This results in a lot of waste in rivers and, eventually, the seas and ocean.

A BETTER ALTERNATIVE

Sustainable period products are eco-friendly products used for menstruation management like reusable cups,



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

discs, cloth pads or period panties. Menstrual cups are small silicone cups used to collect menstrual fluid. Discs are similar in function, just shaped differently. Reusable pads and period panties are made with multilayer absorbent fabric that can be worn during periods and washed for reuse.

The medical-grade silicone used to produce reusable cups and pads do not react with menstrual fluid or release any toxic substances like artificial fragrance, residual

pesticides from inorganic cotton or bleach into your body. So, in terms of safety, reusable products win easily.

Despite the daunting picture menstrual cups or discs create in your mind, it is far more comfortable than disposable pads or tampons. Once inserted correctly, it is impossible to feel its presence. Unlike disposable pads which can last up to 6 to 8 hours and tampons that last only 4 hours, menstrual cups have a 12-hour wear time. Considering the sticky feeling, bad odour, rashes and wear time disposable pads have to offer, menstrual cups can be an absolute dream when worn and fitted properly.

While disposable products are designed to encourage a lifetime subscription, one reusable cup or disc can be used for up to 10 years. Reusable pads can be used for up to 5 to 10 years. Although reusable products appear more costly, in the long run, they save a lot of money.

If not for the environment, for the sake of safety and comfort it offers and the sheer amount of money it saves, eco-friendly menstrual products are worth a try.

References

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Tazreen wastes her time winning fake arguments in her head. Remind her to finish her argumentative essay instead at tazreenzahan@gmail.com

When Bengali Folklore Meets Pop Culture

ADHORA AHMED

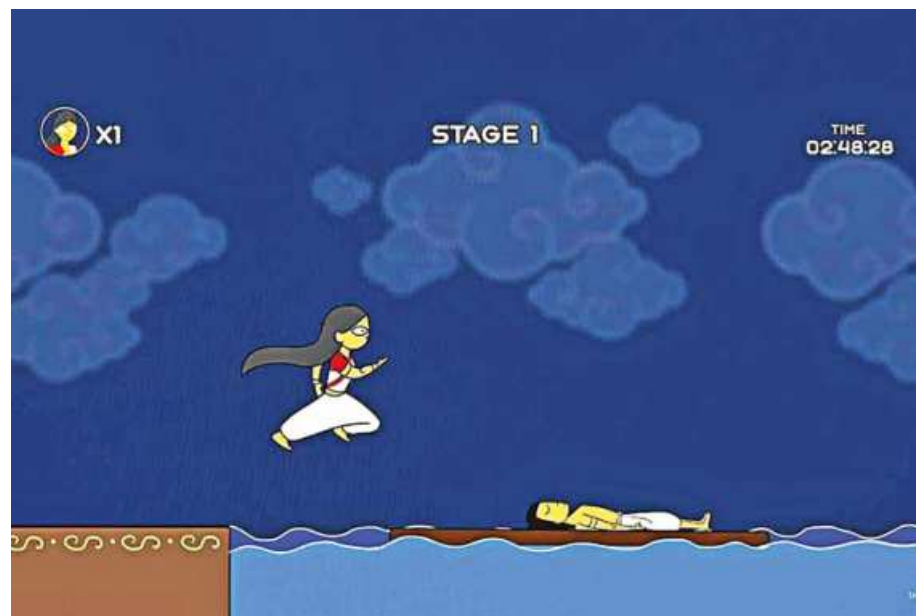
As a society, we often perceive urbanity as a benchmark of sophistication, development, and privilege, hence the innate richness of folklore pales in our eyes. However, our roots lie in our folklore, without which we cannot grow as a people. Yet, sometimes pop culture intersects with folklore in interesting ways, bringing forth obscure facets of our heritage into the mainstream.

BEHULA BY SHUNNO

This viral song is perhaps the most recent phenomenon of the intersection of pop culture and folklore, based on the love story of Behula and Lakhindar. There are several versions of the story with some common elements. Chand Sadagar, Behula's father-in-law, angered the Hindu snake goddess, Manasa. To protect his son Lakhindar from Manasa's wrath, Chand Sadagar built an iron bridal chamber. Despite his efforts, Manasa succeeded in cursing Lakhindar with a snakebite. Behula sailed with her husband's body on a raft, pleading with the gods to restore life to Lakhindar in exchange for winning Chand Sadagar's allegiance to Manasa. The gods were won over, hence they returned Lakhindar to his beloved Behula.

THAKURMAR JHULI

Only 2000s kids remember this gem of a



show. Just kidding, we all do, because this cartoon series was based on the anthology of folktales across Bengal compiled by Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumder in the early twentieth century. Like other folktales and fairy tales around the world, the stories of "Thakurmar Jhuli" were transmitted primarily to teach children important values. The cartoon show reintroduced the timeless stories of *Thakurma*

to a whole new generation that is better acquainted with TV screens.

KRISHNO BY HABIB FT. KAYA

Habib Wahid's debut album, featuring vocalist Kaya, was all the rage back in 2003. Habib and Kaya's collaboration, fusing folk elements with hip-hop, gifted us an album full of insanely catchy and innovative renditions of folk songs, which are attributed to a number of *bauls*

and other folk musicians including Shah Abdul Karim, Arkum Shah, Jalal Kha and Deeno Hin.

SULTANA BIBIANA BY JAMES

Folklore doesn't only consist of songs and stories. It also includes other activities of life, such as children's games. This song is, essentially, an ode to the games some of us have probably grown up playing. In big cities like Dhaka, where fields are increasingly being encroached by construction projects and sports are becoming gentrified, "Sultana Bibiana" paints an idyllic picture of children running across rice fields, playing games like *daria bandha*, *bouchi*, *kanamachi*, or *danguli* to their heart's content. The title of the song refers to a rhyme, briefly incorporated into the lyrics, which is recited in some of these games.

The combination of pop culture and folklore might sound controversial to some. Although you could argue that a hip-hop rendition of an obscure folk song does the original material much disservice by making it palatable to the mainstream, I believe such references in pop culture can generate interest in our heritage. And what harm is there in knowing more about our culture?

Adhora Ahmed listens to too many "sad white boy" songs. Recommend her better music at adhora.ahmed@gmail.com