

# Sustainable Fashion “An Initiative towards a Greener World”

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## ABSTRACT

*With trending words such as “Eco” and “Green” being thrown around a lot these days, sustainable culture is gradually growing as a hot topic. Sustainability in terms of Environmental sustainability, Architectural sustainability and Social sustainability, with special mention of Sustainable clothing, is the need of the hour so as to meet our requirements of the present without compromising the ability of up- coming generations to meet their basic needs.*

*To create a sustainable society one has to have equal access to health care, clean water, comfortable shelter & clothing etc. Sustainability also covers aspects of environment resource management & protection. Words carrying “RE” with them such as REDUSE / REUSE / RECYCLE have great importance in the world of Sustainability.*

*Eco fashion, also called sustainable fashion, is a part of the growing design and trend of sustainability, the goal of which is to create a system which can be supported indefinitely in terms of human dependence on the environment and social responsibility. It can be visualized as an alternative trend against regular fashion.*

*The fashion world can have a pivotal role to play in delivering a sustainable future simply because of all the avenues and industries it touches. It contributes huge amounts to economies, creates jobs and holds influence over global supply chains.*

**Key words** –Eco, Environment, Fashion, Future generations, Sustainability

## INTRODUCTION

**‘Innovation is an achievement but innovating recycled stuff is a success’.**

Sustainability, by definition, should meet the needs of current generation without compromising needs of future generations. From an environmental perspective, the aim should be to minimize any undesirable environmental effect of the product’s life cycle by ensuring efficient and careful use of natural resources like water, energy, land, soil, animals, plants, renewable energy sources at every stage, and maximizing repair, remake, reuse, and recycling of the product and its components.

“Sustainability” is a word which we hear every day in today’s scenario. But do we really understand what sustainability is? Sustainability may be defined as an ability of something to be maintained or sustained. A sustainable activity should be able to continue forever.

Sustainable fashion can be defined as clothing and fashion accessories that are manufactured, marketed and used in the most sustainable manner possible. In practice, it means continuous improvement at all stages of the product’s life cycle, from design, raw material production, manufacturing, transport, storage, marketing and final sale to use,

reuse, repair, redesign and recycling of the product and its components. Sustainable fashion is about being kind to our environment, responsible with our resources and treating our fellow garment workers like human beings.

There are many reasons behind the sustainable fashion movement and main reason is the fast fashion phenomenon. Low-cost garments flies off the shelves faster, so brands have started focusing on cheap garments. People want to buy more low cost garments every season even though due to short life span, they need to be discarded at the end of the season. This behaviour of customers needs to be changed to implement the sustainable fashion movement. We must encourage the demand for more personalized clothing, accessories and other items of superior quality that are produced on-demand.

The major challenge in sustainability is the cooperation of all suppliers of fashion components. They have to be accounted for, from labour to transportation from factory to retail outlet, aftercare and disposal of garments. The fashion industry has a major responsibility. The fashion industry reinvents itself all the time. Carrying this thought of recycling style one step further, some fashion designers are finding different ways to use recycled and discarded materials in their designs. This uses minimum energy in production and produces less waste materials.

The fashion and entertainment industry is fully supporting this movement. To save earth and give the message of Sustainability, during the fashion shows and award functions, Red carpet is replaced with Green carpet. Even media Publications are using “sustainable” and “eco-friendly” in the same sentence with “fashion.” These adjectives may not be on the short list of words we’re used to associating with the industry, but clearly, change is brewing. The enthusiasm building among both designers and consumers indicates that socially responsible fashion may be more than a fleeting trend sense both brands and consumers are paying attention.

The aim of sustainable fashion is to prolong the value of local production, to increase the lifecycle of materials, the value of timeless garments, to reduce the amount of waste, and harm to the environment.

## **1. ECO FRIENDLY CLOTHING**

Eco friendly clothing refers to fabrics derived from eco-friendly resources, such as sustainably grown fiber crops or recycled materials. The use of environmental friendly materials e.g., bamboo, hemp, organic cotton also, garments made from one fiber (e.g., 100% organic cotton) can be re spun into fibers again. For textile production, using energy and water efficient processes for dyes and finishes or use natural dyes. Also support locally made garments, avoid import and export around the world. The natural fibers like silk, linen, wool, and organic cotton are all better choices than synthetic materials like polyester and nylon, which are made with fossil fuels in a process that emits large amounts of carbon dioxide and are not biodegradable.



When looking for clothing made with sustainable principles and products, the selection has been very less. So how does fashion industry that changes with the seasons turn over a new eco-friendly, socially-conscious? This challenge is part of what makes this emerging fashion trend to look forwards.

## 2. INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

International fashion brands are continuously moving towards Eco friendly products. Levi Strauss & Co. has a long history of caring for our environment. They made sure that their products which hit the market are durable and last long. H&M is the first fashion company to launch a global garment collection initiative. You can hand over any clothes you no longer want. This is how waste is reduced and old products a new life. They believe, "Don't let fashion go waste."

"We feel socially responsible as a unit wearing this jersey kit and doing our bit for the environment. So in that regards, I am really proud of what NIKE has given us" quoted by R. Ashwin, when Indian Cricket team was given jersey kit for Cricket World Cup 2015 made out of recycled polyester bottles. This jersey fabric enhances stretch ability and moisture retaining quality.



Each Team India kit (jersey and pants) is made of approximately 33 recycled plastic bottles

International fashion Designers are also proving recycled materials make elegant outfits fit enough to grace the runway fashion or red carpet. At Met Gala, actress Emma Watson's sleek, monochrome gown woven from yarn

made out of recycled plastic bottles made waves for its true sustainability and responsible sourcing.

UK-based designer Christopher Raeburn has become famous for his sustainable runway designs, making bold garments with utilitarian, elemental-hued silhouettes which use remade, reworked garments and recycled yarn. It's true that socially conscious and green fashion trends are making big waves. From local, small and unknown designers to big-name companies like Nike and Levi's, key players in the fashion industry are making strides toward global awareness. Several big fashion brands like Gucci, Calvin Klein, Stella McCartney and Puma are also stressing on sustainable designs.



### 3. SUSTAINABLE FACTS – REDUCE, REUSE & RECYCLE

The Three R's: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle are the only way to save the environment from getting deteriorated.

Reducing or minimizing the amount of waste you produce is the best way to improve the environment. Moving towards sustainable lifestyle isn't easy. People must be encouraged to remember that every small step they take is making an impact. So, here are some easy ways to incorporate recycling, reusing, and redesigning into your daily lifestyle.

Ideally, every new garment should first be manufactured on demand or custom-made, in high quality and timeless design, in an environmentally friendly manner and with consideration to various ethical aspects. Thereafter, the garments should be used long and taken good care, repair and perhaps redesign. When the product is no longer desired, it should be handed in to a secondhand shop, donated to charity or handed over to friends, relatives, to prolong its active life. When the garment is fully worn out, it should be returned to a collection point for recycling of the textile material, which again can be reused in the manufacturing of new clothes or other textile products.

### 4. THE FIRST “R” -REDUCE

To be a part of sustainable world, each individual must follow the word “REDUCE”. Reduce waste in everyday life through opting for reusable bags, avoid excess shopping, avoid food waste, buy in bulk or in large-size packaging, eco-rechargeable or refillable products, use rechargeable batteries and restrict printer usage etc.

#### 4.1. Reduce Buying

One thing we can do is to limit our acquisition of new clothes. For some time unsubscribe from fashion store newsletters, block their numbers on your mobiles, they tend to convince us to purchase more clothing. Repair or redesign your existing clothing to last longer. We can take many free video tutorials on DIY from the Internet to learn to replace broken zippers, patch holes or mend buttons of your favorite clothing. Finally, if we have to buy new clothing, consider clothing made from recycled materials, and make sure that they are durable items and can be used for years to come.

#### **4.2. REDUCE ENERGY USE**

We can save energy by doing laundry on a sunny day and reduce energy use at home by air-drying clothes. To dry clothes purchase a good quality clothesline and clothespins and hang clothes on clothesline the backyard! Not only clothes will smell wonderful, skipping the dryer helps reduce wear and tear on clothing, making it last longer.

#### **4.3. REDUCE BULK & CLUTTER**

To create more space in your closet, reduce the use of bulky hangers, by investing in thin hangers. This will fit more clothes into your closet and will give your closet a more uniformity. On monthly basis clean wardrobes, closet and drawers to remove unused clothes and accessories. Keep only the items that fit well, getting rid of items you do not love and styles that are out of date. Gift them in your family or friends. They will feel happy and it's a wonderful gesture to seal your relationships with your near and dear ones. Outdated items can be donated to the orphanages or under privileged people. This will give you great self-satisfaction.

### **5. THE SECOND "R" -REUSE**

Reuse is the action of using something again, whether for its original purpose or for different creative function.

Reusing articles, clothing and accessories save time, money, energy and limited resources. Reuse of clothing provides an excellent, environmental friendly alternative to other waste management methods, because it reduces air, water and land pollution, limits the need for new natural resources, such as fibers and other materials

Most of the times, we often wonder as what to do with clothes that no longer fit or have already seen many seasons. Luckily, there are plenty of ways to be mindful and sustainable when clearing of what we no longer need. We can give our clothes a second life and make an impact on other. You can reuse garments, accessories and other materials in their original form instead of throwing them away, or pass those materials on to others who could use them too! Remember, one person's trash is another person's treasure!

#### **5.1. DONATE**

If you're looking to support orphanages, refugees, under privileged families, or those seeking shelter with NGOs, there are many resources out there to find the best place for you. It is always recommended to call or visit the old age homes, charitable organization and orphanages before you donate to ask what is required by the inmates, it may be clothing, bed linen or woolens. Make a habit of donating clothes and other accessories in every change of season.

### 5.2. REUSE WHAT YOU ALREADY OWN

It seems interesting, start with looking in your own wardrobe again. Many people, especially women folk forget what they own or have purchased in the past. Try to see each outfit in a new light, perhaps pairing it with new accessories you have. The mix and match will create new look for you. If all fails, think of new ways to utilize the clothes. For example, you can convert unused Saree and Dupattas into carry bags, cushion covers etc.

### 5.3. SWAPPING WITH FRIENDS & RELATIVES

To keep up with the latest styles, consider swapping them among friends instead of buying. In metro cities holding a swap party with your friends, is a common practice. Exchange those items that you no longer love & let your friends give them love. In turn, you can also find new clothes for your new look. What is more fun than inviting your loved ones over for a clothing swap party? Have each attendee bring at least 5-10 pieces they no longer wear that are still wearable. It's a best situation as everyone will walk away with a new wardrobe and feel even more excited for the next time around.

### 5.4. DIY INTO USABLE ITEMS

Turn your unused garments into something useful, whether that's a rug, quilt, or vegetable bag. You can easily redesign your old clothes into a smaller garment, rug and multi utility articles. You can also cut strips and do weaving. Use them as rugs around the house - they're durable, easy to wash and available free.

If you're in love with your clothes despite wear and tears, you can always redesign them up or create a new style! A simple online YouTube classes will give you all the tools you need to revitalize your most beloved pieces.



Old Anarkali Kurta is redesigned as Maxi Skirt through DIY activity

### 5.5. REPURPOSE/REDESIGN OLD DENIMS

Transform your old jean jacket into the trendy vest, or cut the bottoms of your favorite jeans and add some lace to make shorts for summers. Repurposing brings a new life to something that's used and doesn't contribute to the textiles waste. Buying recycled or reused means you don't always have to be nice so it's key to look beyond the garment. Think of all the ways you can redesign it to make it an innovative item of your dreams. This also works for the items you



currently own, perhaps make those old pair of jeans into cool denim shorts or those midi skirts into mini- skirts, braided denim rug, Turn old jeans into potholders etc.



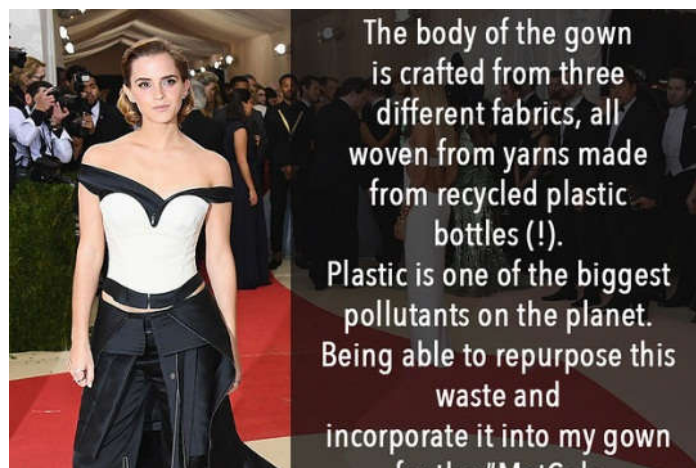
Innovative accessories created from old denims like neck piece, decorated holder& chic denim-shorts

Always mend old textiles/fabric and keep using them if possible, instead of throwing them away. Textile pieces can be used to make home furnishing and other handy articles such as cushion covers, teapot cozies, laptop covers, leg warmers, quilts, new accessories (i.e. woven scarves, socks, and hats) and so much more. If you have old linens, towels or blankets, contact your local animal shelter; they may be able to reuse them as animal bedding.

## 6. THE THIRD “R” - RECYCLE

In our disposable society, fast-changing fashion trends and cheap manufacturing mean we can throw things away without a second thought. The result is plastics clog the ocean and landfill sites expand.

As waste material continues to rise each year we produce 3 per cent more waste than the year before. As resources become even-more scarce, the need to recycle existing materials is increasingly important. Forty per cent of the world’s waste ends up in huge rubbish heaps, which pose a serious threat to human health and the environment. As per recent studies, by 2050 there could be more plastic in the oceans than fish. With these alarms in mind, the fashion industry is putting itself on the frontline of the battle against waste.



Emma Watson's sleek, monochrome gown woven from yarn made out of recycled plastic bottles

Recycling is an important aspect of a sustainable lifestyle and in preserving the resources used by society and industries. The knowledge of sustainability and recycling and the impacts of living consciously are necessary for the process of leading more meaningful and responsible lives towards the greener world.

Recycling is a way to process the used materials into innovative products and to prevent waste of potentially useful materials. Recycling reduces the consumption of fresh raw materials, energy usage, air pollution created mainly from incineration, water pollution and land pollution. Recycling is the key component of modern waste reduction and is a 3<sup>rd</sup> major component of the "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Recover" waste hierarchy



Garments made by recycled bottles *The Golden Book Gown* made of recycled pages

### 6.1. RECYCLE TEXTILE WASTE

Textile waste recycling becomes more important phenomenon, bearing in mind the limited availability of resources to produce natural fibers as well as fossil raw materials to make synthetic fibers. Recycling textile waste can be further converted in the form of fiber for filling, recycled yarns, recycled woven & nonwoven fabrics.

The textile waste can be classified as either pre- consumer or post- consumer. Pre consumer textile waste consists of by product materials from textile industry. Post- consumer textile waste consists of any type of clothing that consumer no longer needs and decides to discard. There is a major need to identify suitable solutions of these waste related issues.

### 6.2. RECYCLE CLOTHES & FABRICS

Fashion and recycling have worked in tandem for decades through upcycling, but now designers are becoming increasingly adventurous, creating stylish, beautiful designs from an array of waste products. Garments and other items that aren't suitable to be passed onto someone else can be recycled and made into new designs, besides personal use, they can be recycled, as padding for chairs, car seats & cushions, cleaning cloths and industrial blankets.



You can do a little recycling of your own. Turn a beloved T-shirt into a decorative pillow cover, for example. T-shirts also make particularly good rags for cleaning and can save you money by eliminating paper towels from your cleaning routine. From the kitchen to the garage, you never know when a good rag will come in handy.

### 6.3. RECYCLE WASTE MATERIAL INTO FASHION ACCESSORIES

If you have a handful of unused junk materials and you don't want to store them at home, then turn them into something useful—like fashion accessories. Yes, we are talking about making a fashion statement from recycled materials. There is lot of waste like old electronic items, artificial jewelry, plastic goods etc. Fortunately, we have a variety of options for dealing with our discarded stuff. Here are tips for things you can do with old waste materials.



Neck piece made by cereal boxes



Innovative attire created from unused ties

Waste junk bottle caps and cereal boxes lying in your house trash? Save them; create a neck piece and it can make a great fashion statement. Those unused extra ties from your father and brother's wardrobe will finally come to life if they can be redesigned with this tie skirt ensemble.

### CONCLUSION

The fashion fraternity has a vital role to play in delivering a sustainable future simply because of all the areas and industries it covers. It contributes huge amounts to world economies, creates jobs and holds a significant influence over society. Now consumers are no longer demanding products. They demand transparency, brand's entire identity and set of values. They look for values that include ethics and sustainability.

As consumer demand grows for eco- friendly sourced clothes, big fashion brands are starting to think about sustainability too. Nike made socks, shorts and jerseys from shredded, recycled plastic bottles for the sports completions. Since 2010 the company has diverted more than two billion plastic bottles from landfills into recycled polyester. In India Unilever is also recycling used plastic bottles.

Now many Indian fashion designers are exploring different materials altogether. Indian brands like UPASANA, NO NASTIES, BROWN BOY, KA SHA etc. are continuously promoting Green fashion. Textile manufacturers are also using bamboo, soy, corn and wood pulp to create environmentally sound alternatives to cotton fabric, and many fashion designers are using traditional, natural dyes as a part of their initiatives to create sustainable fashion.

You can be a part of Recycling if you are willing to buy and sell your clothes, jewelry items and fashion accessories. Since this is the digital age, there are plenty of options for selling and buying your clothes and accessories online. For online shops, you must sign up to their email list, as they have weekly discounts. Make a list of all the thrift shops nearby and note when they get new arrivals, that way you're able to get first information on the new items. To avoid excess buying, be sure the item you are looking to purchase. Keep an open mind and be flexible in your choices. Maybe you won't find that exact item but you will find something similar or better.

Globalization of sustainable trends can emerge as a boon in today's world. Sustainability is essential for many reasons including Environmental Quality. In order to have healthy societies, we need clean air, natural resources, nontoxic environment and require more resources such as energy, water, and space.

Sustainable development doesn't always refer to environmental sustainability. Apart from environment, sustainable development also needs to take economic and social sustainability into account in order to fit within the parameters of sustainable development. Going sustainable is the ultimate choice one can make today. Don't miss the opportunity to be a part of this phenomenal movement.. Sooner or later you have to be sustainable.

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