

**PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH SLOW FASHION**

**Sub Theme- Environmental Sustainability**

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**Introduction**

Environmental Sustainability is avoiding depletion or degradation of natural resources and allow them to be preserved for a longer period of time to meet the needs of future generation. The clothing industry has one of the highest impacts on the planet. It creates environmental damage by high water usage, pollution from chemical treatment used in dyeing and preparation. Disposal of large amount of unsold clothing through incineration or landfills deposits are hazardous to the environment. These clothes are full of chemicals which never breakdown and release dangerous chemicals in the air. The fashion industry is the second largest contributor to pollution contributing to 10% of the global production. Only 20% of clothing is recycled or reused.

Nowadays fashion changes like it has never before. Rise in disposable income has led to increase demand of fast fashion goods. They tend to be cheaper, readily available, shorter life span and a greater impact on the environment. Increasing fast fashion leads to increase in carbon footprints. A transition from fast fashion would be slow fashion which would encourage the fashion industry to focus more on sustainable practices and emphasize on better quality natural material which will not have a adverse impact on the environment. Slow fashion, sustainable fashion, responsible fashion, fair fashion, ethical fashion are the many terms used. Slow fashion is an awareness and an approach to fashion. It is not time based but quality based. It focuses on sustainability and considers the process and resources required to make clothing. It involves buying better quality garments that will last longer and help in reducing carbon footprints. Slow fashion has become a movement as more and more people are becoming conscious about the hazards that fast fashion is playing on the environment.

### **Sustainable Fashion**

These are fabrics derived from Eco friendly resources, organic crops or recycled materials. Organic refers to fibers grown according to natural organic standards without the use of toxics and persistent pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, or genetic engineering. (Organic Trade Association, 2012) Sustainable fashion includes fashion that are made from fibers that are produced with less resource abuse in a socially just manner. Use of natural fibers such as cotton, linen, jute, silk, wool, bamboo and recent addition of banana fibers are all a step forward towards sustainable fashion. Buying organic and renewable fibers is the best way to support sustainability. It also means reducing the amount of clothing discarded to landfills. It is concerned with the environmental impact. Many fashion brands that have taken steps towards sustainable fashion whilst reducing their carbon footprints: Bunko Junko, Doodlage, Sundarii Handmade to name a few work towards sustainable fashion.

### **Upcycling**

It is the process of reusing the unwanted and discarded materials such as fabric scraps or clothes into new materials or products without compromising the value and the quality of the used material. It could be both pre-consumer or post-consumer waste. Pre consumer waste is that the product is manufactured using left over pieces after production whereas Post consumer waste is using garments that the user doesn't need or want anymore or have certain defects. These are one of its kind and because of unique combinations and mix and matched styles. They are the most earth friendly form of sustainable fashion. The garments and household linen are torn apart and remade into wonderful items. Reassembling of a garment after being discarded is very crucial. Sarees could be converted to dupattas, Kurtas, textile jewellery, bags, scarves wraps, footwear etc.

Lakmé India Fashion Week Summer/Resort 2017 dedicated its second day to 'Sustainable Fashion and Indian Textiles', displaying several brands who are creating a new vocabulary for sustainable fashion narratives in the country; the show aptly titled "Reincarnations" focused on the various ways fashion can acquire a new life through repurposing, reusing, and recycling. ( R Tryphena and Dr.I Arul Aram)

### **The Three Rs- reduce, reuse and recycle**

These are the three main pillars of slow fashion. Combination of reduce, reuse and recycle form a complete circle that can preserve natural resources, reduce waste, energy consumption and pollution and protect the planet. We live in a world that offers us abundance of choices. It's not anti-consumption but it is alternative consumption. The motto is buy less, each time an individual shops. The time spent on shopping for excess items could be used in a more constructive way. One can consider second hand and vintage clothing. Don't treat anything as disposable. Consider the product lifecycle to keep things out of landfills (repair, donate, up cycle, etc)

It is easy to shop cheap and fast fashion but a conscious choice needs to be made. Keeping purchases to a minimum is an important way of reducing the toll on earth's resources. Cutting back on unnecessary purchases effectively lowers the consumption of energy, gas and transportation cost that occur when an item is sold. Reuse is a broader term and implies to clothing that can be reused in numerous ways. This leads to a reduction in pollution and more natural resources are left intact. Before discarding an item of clothing a thought needs to be given to the use of that item. An old T shirt could be used as a rag. Recycling is the process in which an item or it's component are used to create something new. Recycling is synonymous with reusing but it refers more specifically to items that are discarded and broken down into their raw material. Many companies procure second hand material and use it to manufacture new products. It could be old tyres for preparation of footwear, plastic bottles for the preparation of yarns etc.

### **Revival of Traditional Textiles**

Traditional textiles tend to focus on the use of handlooms which have lesser carbon footprints. Low electrical consumption, use of natural fibres and methods of dyeing all lead to sustainable environmental growth. Many designers are working with traditional weavers and are actively involved in revival and innovation. Madhu Jain, Bina Rao , Mala Sinha each contribute in their own way towards reviving of textiles. Each textile is as different as chalk and cheese. One of the major thrust areas would be design intervention which prevents the stagnation of the textiles. If newer designs are not incorporated people would tend to move away from the traditional textiles towards fast fashion which would again lead to depletion of resources. Indian designers are winning accolades at international sustainable fashion shows and it is heartening to know that young designers are moving towards the textile heritage to

make their ideas visible. The last five years has shown a leap in the number of gen- next designers who are using handlooms for their creation.

### **Buying Eco Labelled Products**

Eco-labelling is one of the tools for sustainable living. It is the practice of marking products with a distinctive label so that the consumer knows that the product that they are buying conforms to environmental standards. It is difficult to find out whether a garment has been made from conventional or organic cotton, or dyed with non-toxic or harmful dye-stuffs just by merely looking at a it. Eco-labels are issued either by Government agencies or private enterprises to the products once it has been proved that it has met the criteria set by them for the label. Some of the popular eco labels to watch for in India are Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), the butterfly Silk mark, India Handloom mark etc. ( R Tryphena and Dr.I Arul Aram)

### **Tips for Sustainable fashion**

- Look after your clothes so they will last longer
- Do not tumble dry but dry the in open
- Style outfits and move towards a mix and match wardrobe
- Buy organic clothing
- Look for Eco labels when purchasing
- Go for Quality over Quantity
- Invest in items of clothing which will have repeated use
- Buy garments with longevity in mind.
- Change your perspective

### **Conclusion**

Global fashion industry has faced the consequences of social and environmental implications associated with fast production cycles, overuse of resources, waste generation, environmental pollution and unethical labour conditions. Increasing consumer awareness regarding social and environmental impacts of fashion products has led to develop a new market for sustainable and ethical products. Slow fashion is the future, but one needs to understand the transition which requires creativity and collaboration between designers and manufacturers,

retailers, and consumers. A move towards 'slow fashion' would encourage the industry to focus on more sustainable practices, and an emphasis on better-quality materials which last longer.

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