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### Sustainable fashion as a catalyst for social development and cultural continuity in India

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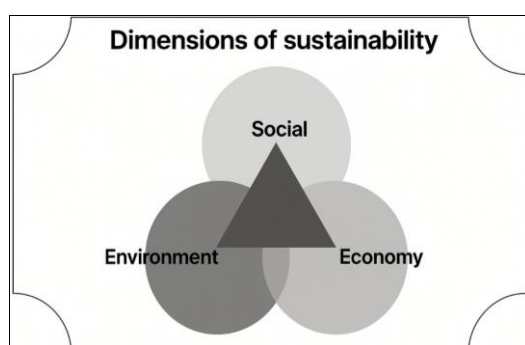
#### Abstract

Sustainability, cultural legacy, and social equality all meet in the Indian fashion business, which is at a crossroads. This article delves at the ways sustainable fashion techniques in India might spur social development and preserve cultural heritage. Analysing the fashion industry's structure, it brings attention to the role of artisanal expertise and traditional crafts in promoting environmentally conscious innovation. Sustainable development approaches, rent-based systems, and closed-loop supply chains that match fashion with circular economy ideas are explored in the research. The article also takes a look at how people feel about slow fashion, how consumers are starting to embrace the concept, and how the handloom industries may help local communities. The study assesses how international agreements, industry norms, and governmental regulations all play a role in creating a more sustainable environment. The incorporation of design-led methodologies and technical advancements, as well as case studies of craft-based businesses, highlight realistic tactics for execution. Despite encouraging progress, the research acknowledges obstacles including reluctance from the mass market, inadequate infrastructure, and gaps in the implementation of policies. The research concludes that in the long run, sustainable fashion in India would help the country's economy and ecology weather storms while also protecting its cultural heritage. In order to facilitate this change, we provide suggestions for future studies, government initiatives, and business practices.

**Keywords:** Sustainable fashion, cultural continuity, social development, Indian fashion industry, handloom, slow fashion, craft preservation, circular economy, rent-based fashion, closed-loop supply chain, consumer behavior, policy and governance, eco-innovation

#### Introduction

The goal of sustainable fashion is to reduce negative effects on the environment and increase positive social impacts by incorporating eco-friendly techniques and fair labour standards throughout the whole fashion industry's supply chain <sup>[1]</sup>. In order to make the sector more fair, it stresses the need of taking a comprehensive strategy that thinks about everything from the extraction of raw materials to their disposal.



**Fig 1:** Social, Environment and Economy Are Dimensions of Sustainability

Through the preservation of traditional textile and craft practices, eco-friendly clothing has become an integral part of Indian culture. Using eco-friendly products and supporting local craftspeople helps preserve the nation's rich legacy and ensures that traditional skills continue to flourish. Sustainable methods not only uphold cultural values but also aid in protecting priceless legacy, enabling it to adapt to modern designs<sup>[2]</sup>. So, sustainable fashion is a way to show pride in one's heritage while also encouraging eco-friendly behaviours, which leads to a better future <sup>[3]</sup>. It emphasises a regenerative system that is good for people and the earth, uses eco-friendly products, and cuts down on waste while making ensuring workers are treated fairly. This combination promotes ethical practices in modern fashion while also supporting local craftspeople and preserving cultural heritage. So, eco-friendly clothing is a win-win it helps preserve India's cultural diversity while also honouring social and environmental principles. By using eco-friendly processes and materials acquired locally, sustainable fashion helps to preserve traditional crafts, which in turn reduces environmental impact and preserves skills <sup>[4]</sup>. It promotes sustainable agriculture and helps save resources by using handloom fabrics and natural dyes.

Working together with craftspeople helps keep their skills current, which in turn generates income and spreads cultural values figure1. In this way, sustainable fashion serves to promote new ideas while simultaneously protecting cultural traditions by means of ethical, contemporary takes on age-old skills [5].

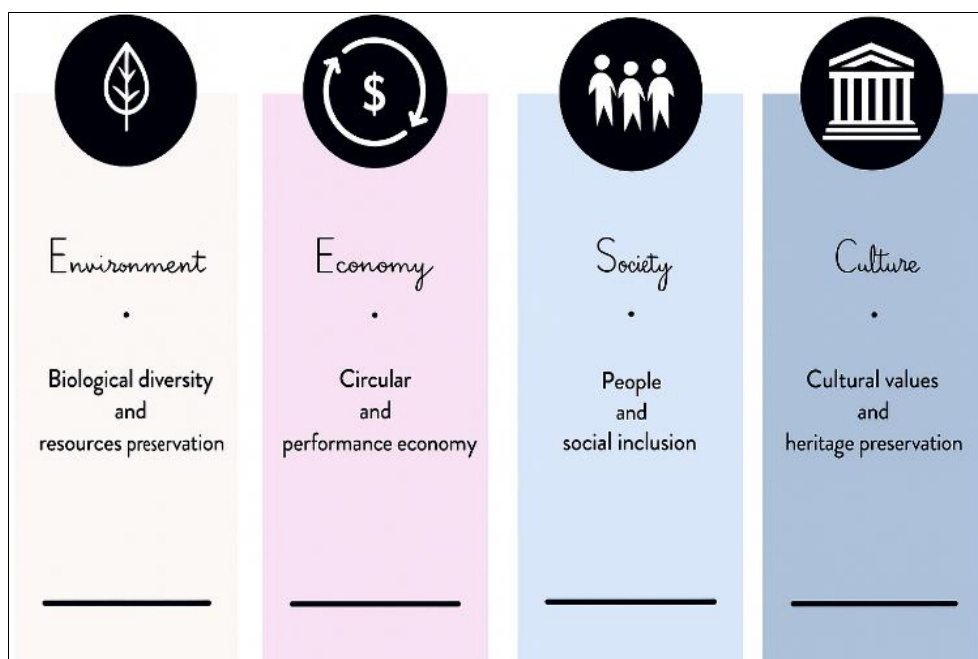
### Structure of fashion industry

The relationship between eco-friendly clothing and maintaining Indian traditions is discussed in this overview. The book highlights the significance of incorporating traditional fabrics and crafts into contemporary fashion as a means to preserve India's cultural legacy and promote social and environmental consciousness. We offer methods to encourage craftsmanship in the fashion industry while discouraging cultural appropriation, and we stress the importance of craft as a storehouse of cultural knowledge. We take a look at sustainable approaches like rent-based systems and closed-loop supply chains to highlight their capacity for ethical consumption. The article takes a close look at consumer behaviour, specifically looking at how people feel about sustainable goods and what variables affect their decision to buy. Marketers and lawmakers may benefit from a better understanding of these factors as they work to close the gap between sustainable fashion purchasing intentions and actions.

Not only is the need for long-term corporate incentives recognised, but so are obstacles such as a lack of agreement and customer demand. On the other side, there are potential to improve industrial sustainability via design-led methods, educational programs, and collaborations [6]. Government laws and international partnerships are only two of the policy and governance frameworks that the paper argues for in order to promote sustainable practices. By incorporating craft-based processes and slow fashion concepts into the handloom industry, successful case studies show how to create a long-lasting and culturally rich fashion sector in India while preserving traditional knowledge [7].

### Fashion, Culture, and Sustainability

Garments and accessories are a form of cultural expression that mirror the values and customs of a society. Traditional Indian garments, such as sarees and kurtas, are highly revered and worn on important occasions. Sustainable fashion is all about supporting local artisans and their eco-friendly materials. It's a win-win for historical preservation and economic growth in the area [8]. In the face of mass manufacturing, this strategy helps traditional crafters stay in business. Creativity and innovation are fostered while skills are preserved for future generations via the integration of historic methods into modern fashion [9].



**Fig 2:** Factors affecting sustainable fashion, source [4]

By bringing people closer to their roots and encouraging them to be more environmentally aware, sustainable design serves to preserve cultural values while also making a difference in the world.

### Role of Craft in Sustainable Fashion and Cultural Preservation

Crafts are a reflection of the inherited wisdom and expertise of a people. They are representations of cultural identity, social systems, and regional history, and they contain knowledge that has been passed down over the ages. For

example, designs in needlework represent different cultural values, while traditional saree weaving uses elaborate patterns to highlight tales of origins, beliefs, and social hierarchy [4]. In addition, by using eco-friendly techniques that reduce waste and rely on local, natural resources, handicrafts encourage sustainable practices. To ensure that traditional artists' skills and knowledge are conserved and adapted for future generations, it is important to support craft-based methods that promote their economic viability. In order to keep handicrafts relevant in today's market, designers and craftspeople may work together to produce

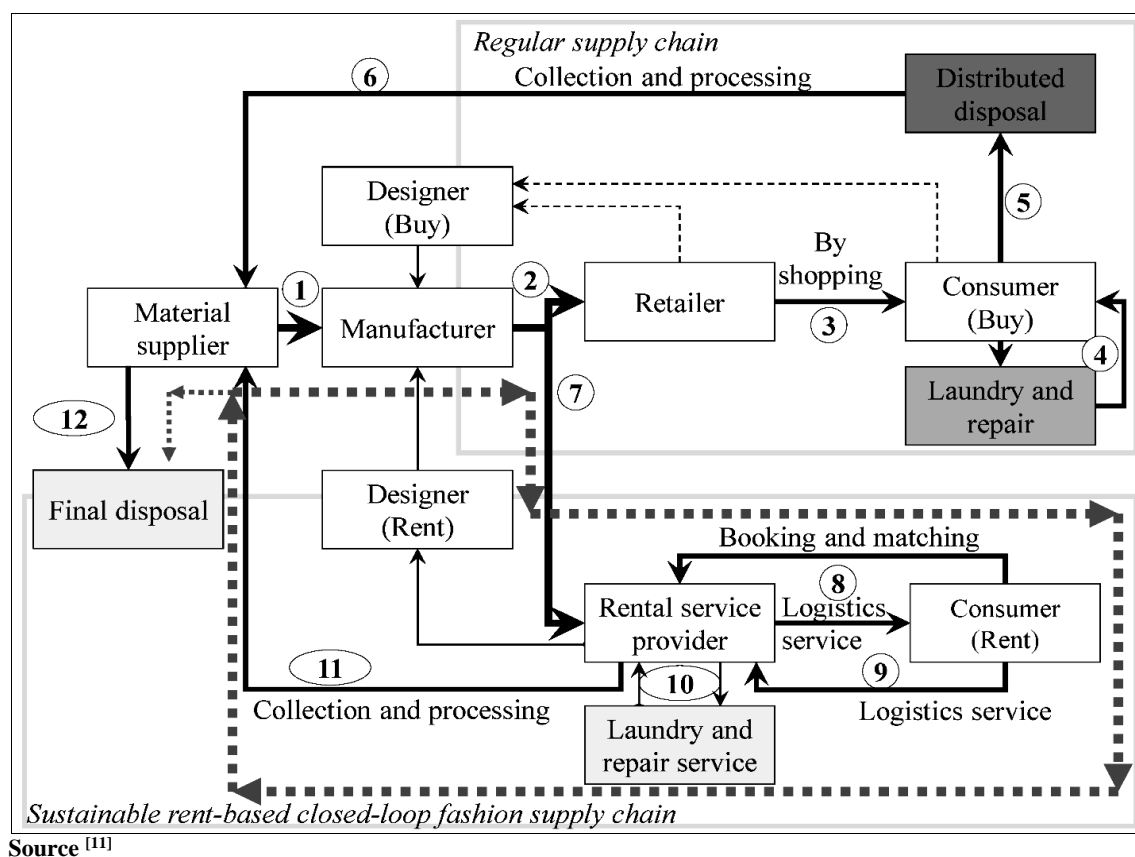
modern goods that honour ancient traditions <sup>[19]</sup>. The preservation of cultural heritage and the promotion of sustainable livelihoods are both aided by this assistance, which helps to maintain a balance between the old and the new. One way to innovate while keeping cultural importance is to incorporate traditional craft into modern design <sup>[16]</sup>. Working together, designers and craftspeople create one-of-a-kind items that have an international impact by combining contemporary style with traditional craftsmanship and materials. In addition to preserving ancient crafts, this technique promotes innovation and originality in the fashion industry <sup>[10]</sup>. Some examples of this kind of design in contemporary clothing are cultural embroidery and handwoven materials. Sustainable practices, including using natural dyes or recycled materials, may help the fashion industry create eco-friendly goods. Supporting craft-based firms by providing training and helping them build their businesses gives craftsmen the skills they need. As a result, the craft sector may experience growth and sustainable livelihoods, and economic development, cultural preservation, and fashion industry innovation may all come together in a harmonious union. A fair trade agreement may,

for instance, guarantee that local craftspeople get a reasonable wage and that some of the proceeds go back into the neighborhood. Similarly, craftsmen' IP rights and agency over their cultural legacy may be safeguarded by a cultural heritage agreement. As part of this process, we must establish lasting connections with craftspeople, provide them with the tools they need, and promote their wares in an honest and ethical way.

### Sustainable development models in fashion

#### Closed-Loop Supply Chains

The "take-make-dispose" strategy that is followed by traditional linear supply chains results in massive pollution and resource consumption. As part of this process, we collect and process items at the end of their life cycle for reuse or recycling, and we design products to be durable, repairable, and recyclable <sup>[11]</sup>. Using eco-friendly detergents, cutting down on water and energy use, and keeping clothes for longer are all parts of sustainable laundry practices. Recycling more, cutting down on packaging waste, and switching to cleaner fuels are all parts of sustainable logistics <sup>[12]</sup>.



Source <sup>[11]</sup>

Fig 3: Sustainable rent - bases closed-loop fashion supply chain

#### Rent-Based Systems for Fashion Products

The textile waste comes from consumers frequent purchase and dispose them frequently. To rectify these problems the data analytics are being used for better match clothing with consumers or mass. These are the tools that consider the factors like style, size, and individual preferences to make the garments that align with a customer's unique identity that truly reflect their tastes. In rental fashion models, personalization further enhances the user experience,

allowing consumers to select items <sup>[13]</sup>. Sustainable business models not only promote the environmental eco friendly but also the social responsibility but also drive market innovation by encouraging the development of eco-friendly products, services, and processes, these models help reshape consumer expectations and industry norms <sup>[14]</sup>. Many consumers are drawn to sustainable fashion for its perceived benefits—higher quality, longer lifespan, and a sense of individuality. However, a range of factors still contribute to

the gap between sustainable intentions and purchasing behavior. These include concerns about style, comfort, convenience, higher price points, limited awareness, and accessibility. Addressing these barriers requires a deep understanding of consumer psychology and behavior <sup>[15]</sup>. For instance, brands can tackle price sensitivity by highlighting the long-term value of sustainable products or by offering more affordable eco-friendly options. Some consumers justify unsustainable choices through rationalizations, such as economic concerns or misplaced trust in government regulations. These justification strategies help them maintain a positive self-image while continuing to engage in practices like buying fast fashion or supporting brands with questionable labor ethics. In such cases, arguments centered on cost or inconvenience are often used to excuse behavior that might otherwise be considered unethical.

### **Consumer Attitudes Towards Sustainable Products**

Finding out what stops people from buying eco-friendly goods and coming up with solutions to those problems is part of this process. Some consumers may try to rationalise their immoral actions by citing reasons like economic logic or their reliance on the government <sup>[16]</sup>. Justification tactics may let customers participate in immoral behaviour, such as buying quick fashion or supporting firms with terrible labour policies, while still maintaining a good self-image and reducing cognitive dissonance. The argument that the government should control immoral behaviour, relieving individual consumers of accountability, may be used as a justification for government reliance. Consumers' incentive to buy sustainable items might be diminished and the gap between their intentions and actual behaviour can be widened by these techniques, which provide reasons for unethical behaviour. The real costs of fast fashion must be brought to light, the ethical and environmental advantages of sustainable goods must be emphasised, and consumers must be empowered to take responsibility of their own buying decisions <sup>[17]</sup>.

### **Slow fashion and handloom: a case study in India**

#### **The Philosophy of Slow Fashion**

Products that are both meaningful and sustainable are the focus of slow fashion, which aims to provide superior value over the long run. Quality, longevity, and timeless style are the hallmarks of slow fashion, in contrast to the rapidity, quantity, and cheap costs of fast fashion. The concept of "slow fashion" promotes a reduction in consumer waste by advocating the purchase of fewer, higher-quality things. Furthermore, it stresses the significance of safe working conditions, fair salaries, and ethical manufacturing methods. Slow fashion seeks to build a more sustainable and egalitarian economy by advocating a more methodical and leisurely approach to the fashion industry. It acts as an advocate for the interests of everyone involved in the value chain <sup>[18]</sup>. The value chain of the fashion business is intricate and linked, with designers, producers, retailers, and consumers all playing a part. Slow fashion acknowledges this. By doing so, it promotes equitable treatment of all stakeholders and guarantees that their interests are taken into account. Fair wages for garment workers, materials sourced from environmentally responsible sources, and

product transparency for customers are all ways to achieve this goal. Slow fashion seeks to build a more fair industry by taking into account the requirements of all stakeholders.

This method is in opposition to fast fashion, which emphasises mass manufacturing and consumption as a whole. A steady flow of new trends, cheap pricing, and short manufacturing cycles define fast fashion. Consumers are incentivised to purchase excess apparel using this technique, resulting in waste and harm to the environment. Low pay, hazardous working conditions, and child labour are some of the unethical labour practices that fast fashion often uses <sup>[19]</sup>. On the other hand, slow fashion advocates for a greener and more moral way of making clothes by highlighting things like long-lasting materials and fair labour standards.

### **Examples of Craft-Based Enterprises**

Promoting cultural continuity and economic growth may be achieved by showcasing successful craft-based fashion firms that maintain cultural heritage. This can motivate others to pursue similar practices. This entails highlighting the experiences of business owners and craftspeople who are making eco-friendly clothing and accessories using age-old techniques <sup>[20]</sup>. Other sustainable fashion ventures may learn from their successes and failures by studying their business models, design tactics, and community impact. This requires looking at the organisational makeup, product design, and community effect of these businesses. Promoting sustainable livelihoods is a great way to show how sustainable fashion helps the economy, which may lead more people to embrace it <sup>[21]</sup>. An important part of this is drawing attention to the fact that craft-based fashion businesses provide jobs and revenue.

By analysing existing programs that encourage the use of slow fashion and handloom, we may learn what makes them work and then create similar ones. Part of this process includes dissecting the tactics used by these campaigns to raise awareness of slow fashion and handloom goods. In order to guide the development of more effective interventions, it is important to evaluate their efficacy in removing obstacles and encouraging sustainable consumption. Evaluation of these efforts' effects on customer actions and ecological results is an important part of this process. To increase the effect of sustainable fashion, it is necessary to understand what made these programs successful so that similar ones might be launched in different settings. Finding out what matters most for these projects' success is part of this process.

### **The Role of Technology and Innovation in Fashion Industry**

Investigating the impact of AI-driven technologies on consumer decision-making includes studying chatbots, personalised suggestions, and virtual try-on features. Sustainable fashion may be popularised and made more accessible to customers via the use of artificial intelligence to increase engagement and buy intent. This may include using AI to tailor product suggestions to individual consumers, disseminate data on eco-friendly manufacturing methods and materials, and incentivise eco-friendly shopping. One approach is to use supply chain tracking technology like blockchain to monitor production processes



for signs of social and environmental harm. Minimising pollution and preserving resources may be achieved by developing and encouraging the use of sustainable materials, which in turn reduces the environmental effect of fashion. Displaying groundbreaking initiatives that combine sustainability, design, and technology may motivate others to think beyond the box, which in turn drives innovation in the fashion sector. One way to do this is to showcase initiatives that are making strides towards more sustainable fashion by experimenting with new materials, design methods, and technology <sup>[22]</sup>. To help create more sustainable fashion methods, it is important to analyse their social and environmental impacts. As part of this process, we must determine how much these initiatives will benefit society and the environment. By investigating its scalability and replicable qualities, we can increase the impact of sustainable fashion and ensure its continued viability. Examining the potential for expanding and re-creating similar initiatives in other settings is part of this process.

### **Opportunities for promoting sustainability in fashion**

Sustainability in fashion from beginning at the very first stage design. It is essential Considering environmental impact early in the garment design phase is no longer optional. Designing with sustainability in mind not only be treated as an afterthought but as a core principle embedded in the entire creative process. Always a Thoughtful decisions about garment materials, manufacturing processes, and a product's fashion lifecycle play a vital role in reducing environmental damage and nurturing community responsibility. By adopting sustainable practices into the work, designers can meet consumer demands while significantly minimizing their ecological footprint final results of Products that are not only stylish but also environmentally responsible and of course sustainability isn't just about choosing eco-friendly fabrics but also about pushing the boundaries of innovation by exploring new materials, adopting sustainable practices for production methods, and innovate creative garments designed from repair, reuse, and recyclability and from disposal garments also Designers who embrace experimentation and forward-thinking are helping to advance sustainable fashion through fresh and impactful ideas.<sup>[12]</sup>Fashion not only have to sacrifice aesthetics in the name of sustainability On the contrary, sustainability also give beauty which can coexist. Designers can take craft inspiration from traditional crafts, organic shapes, and minimalist the fast fashion which impact the environment so for this can used many sustainable practices Principles such as durability, simplicity, and timelessness can result in garments that are both visually appealing and ethically eco-friendly However, for these ideals to gain proper motion across the fashion industry and also in education sector also its hey aware students who will be upcoming designers <sup>[15]</sup>. Many of the fashion professional still lack the necessary trainings /MOOCS in sustainable design principles, materials, and production techniques. Covering all these gaps we need proper offline online moocs courses, seminars, online/offline so that every mass understand the sustainable practices <sup>[13]</sup> Raising awareness among consumers is just as critical. While sustainable fashion has many benefits, a large portion of shoppers remain unaware of the industry's impact

on people and the planet<sup>[14]</sup> Educating consumers about these issues through advertising, social media campaigns, and public outreach can help shift buying habits toward more ethical and sustainable choices. Transparency is another crucial factor. Today's consumers want to know the origins of their clothing where it was made, how it was produced, and under what conditions. Improving supply chain visibility and providing clear information about sourcing, labor practices, and manufacturing processes can enhance trust and demonstrate a genuine commitment to sustainability. True progress also requires collective effort. Designers, manufacturers, retailers, and consumers must work together to build a sustainable fashion ecosystem. <sup>[14]</sup>

### **Policy and governance for sustainable fashion**

#### **Government Regulations and Incentives**

Regulations that promote sustainable practices should be put in place to encourage businesses in the fashion industry to use sustainable practices. This will create an even playing field for all businesses.<sup>[6]</sup>Such regulations may apply to the use of potentially hazardous materials, workplace safety, and rubbish disposal. If businesses that use sustainable practices are given incentives, the fashion industry might transition to a more sustainable future more quickly. This will encourage investment and innovation. Examples of this include tax benefits, grants, and subsidies. We can promote the development of novel materials and technologies that will result in a more sustainable fashion industry down the road by providing funds for research and development in sustainable fashion <sup>[27]</sup>.

#### **Industry Standards and Certifications**

By creating and promoting sustainable fashion industry standards, businesses may collaborate under a common framework. This could include standards for labor procedures, materials, and manufacturing. The creation of certification programs that verify sustainable practices may help consumers feel more at ease knowing they are buying products that meet specific social and environmental standards. The Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), Bluesign, and Fair Trade are a few instances of these certifications. If the supply chain is more transparent and accountable, consumers might be more informed about the social and environmental impacts of the products they buy. In particular, this entails describing the origins of the materials used.

#### **International Collaboration and Agreements**

A more sustainable future for the business may be achieved by addressing global issues related to fashion and the environment by involvement in international accords and projects that focus on sustainability <sup>[18]</sup> such agreements are the Sustainable Development Goals and climate change treaties. The transition to a more sustainable fashion industry may be accelerated by encouraging innovation and collaboration through the sharing of information and best practices among countries <sup>[28]</sup>. This discussion may include environment friendly practices, products, and business structures. If we address global sustainability challenges, everyone may profit from a more equitable and sustainable fashion sector in the future. This issue includes pollution, water scarcity, climate change, and labor exploitation.

### Challenges in Implementing Sustainable Fashion Design

For sustainability initiatives to be successful, fashion companies must provide leading designers with new advancement tools, information, and guidance they need to make eco-friendly clothes because Many groups in the fashion industry are confused about the sustainable design or fashion that how to put it into practice <sup>[15]</sup>. Due to costs and benefits, fashion companies may be hesitant to engage themselves in environmentally friendly design or implement other environment friendly policies. Due to lack of consumer demand, fashion companies which in turn limits the availability of eco-friendly products. To adopt the sustainable practices we need to increase the accessibility and affordability of sustainable fashion and also raising public awareness about their positive benefits <sup>[23]</sup> For the sustainable practices we should go for incentive plan for short-term profits because Without a clear commitment to long-term values, businesses are less inclined and interested to invest in sustainable design or adopt eco-friendly practices <sup>[29]</sup> fashion companies should tie up with those groups and fashion companies who can create a culture of long-term responsibility, attracting consumers and employees who share most similar values for environment friendly practices there are many Government interventions such as carbon taxes, subsidies for sustainable materials, and also stricter regulations on waste and pollution can also play a vital role in promoting eco-friendly and sustainable practices many industries bodies can help by establishing certification systems and sustainability standards that give consumers a authentic and reliable information and also enabling them to make informed choices<sup>[29]</sup>Importantly, sustainability is not treated as an last thought in the design process it must be from the very beginning and also help designing garments that are easy to repair, recycle, or reuse, repurpose and also exploring innovative materials, and adopting new methods. Creative designers are always in front of this movement, pushing boundaries to create fashion in both environmentally responsible and aesthetically as simplicity, durability, and timelessness can shape a more sustainable design ethos <sup>[30]</sup>. Sustainable fashion increasing public awareness and education around professionals and consumers to make better decisions. sustainable fashion is also a slow fashion has the power to support marginalized communities, boost local economies, and preserve cultural heritage through meaningful engagement with artisans and traditional craft practices and also Collaborations with industry experts such as NGOs, and sustainability advocates provide fashion brands knowledge with access to valuable resources and expertise, which enhancing their environmental efforts. These types of partnerships also reinforce a brand's credibility and commitment to ethical practices make the environment more ecofriendly sustainable <sup>[30]</sup>.

### Conclusion

Supporting sustainable livelihoods, traditional crafts, and cultural continuity in India may be achieved via sustainable fashion. What this means is that we should promote local craftspeople, incorporate cultural history into fashion design, and advocate for the use of sustainable materials and manufacturing practices. Achieving this objective and defining the direction and effect of sustainable fashion

projects are heavily influenced by craft, consumer behaviour, and business strategies. The arts and crafts provide the groundwork for economic growth and cultural expression. Sustainable goods are in high demand due to consumer behaviour. Sustainable fashion firms may only be financially viable if they follow certain business practices. Guaranteeing the efficacy and impact of sustainable fashion efforts requires tackling obstacles and capitalising on possibilities. To do this, we must first conquer obstacles including low public understanding, prohibitive prices, and a dearth of environmentally friendly building supplies. Making the most of favourable circumstances also includes capitalising on possibilities like rising customer demand, new technical developments, and encouraging government regulations.

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