



Push for Sustainable Clothing

This editorial is based on [“PM Modi’s push for sustainable clothing...”](#) which was published in the Hindu on 13/02/2023. It discusses India’s challenge with the Push for Sustainable Clothing and steps that need to be taken.

For Prelims: Sustainable Clothing, Carbon Emissions, e-commerce, Renewable Energy, National Climate Change Journal, Textile Manufacturing

For Mains: Challenges with Push for Sustainable Clothing, Need of sustainable fashion for a healthy and inclusive environment, Environmental Pollution & Degradation

Recently, India’s Prime Minister **wore a blue vest made of recycled plastic bottles in Parliament**. By doing so, **he was trying to make sustainable clothing a conscious choice** that needs to be made in everyday life to save the environment.

Sustainable clothing refers to garments that are made using eco-friendly and socially responsible practices throughout their entire lifecycle, from design and production to distribution and disposal.

In India, **sustainable clothing is becoming more popular as people are becoming aware of the impact of fast fashion** and seeking alternatives that are more environmentally and socially conscious.

The **rapid growth of e-commerce and widespread smartphone connectivity in India has spurred a cultural phenomenon of urbanization** and acquisitive consumption behaviour, leading to an increase in fast fashion and disposable clothing.

However, **there is hope for a more sustainable future in the clothing industry**. With India's consumer demographics becoming younger, **it is important to raise awareness about the environmental impact of fast fashion** and promote sustainable clothing choices.

What are the Benefits of Promoting Sustainable Clothing in India?

▪ **Reduced Environmental Impact:**

- Sustainable clothing reduces the environmental impact of the fashion industry.
 - Globally, the **fashion industry causes 10% of total carbon emissions** and is a big pollutant. Its yield of harmful greenhouse gases is **projected to grow more than 50% by 2030**.

▪ **Water-Efficient Production Processes:**

- Sustainable fashion brands **use production processes that require less water**.
- For example, some brands use laser cutting and digital printing instead of traditional dyeing and printing methods, which require large amounts of water.

- The industry **uses 93 billion cubic metres of water annually.**
- **3,781 litres of water are used during the production and use phase of one pair of its jeans** while 33.4 kg of **carbon dioxide** is created throughout its lifetime.
- **Improved Quality and Durability:**
 - Sustainable clothing is **often designed to last longer than fast fashion.**
 - This can **help to reduce the amount of clothing that ends up in landfills**, and it can save consumers money in the long run.
 - According to the **National Climate Change Journal (2018)**, **textile manufacturing is one of the most polluting sectors** of the economy, emitting 1.2 billion tonnes of **greenhouse gases.**
- **Consumer Education:**
 - **Promoting sustainable clothing can help to educate consumers** about the impact of their choices on the environment and society.
 - This can **help to raise awareness and encourage more people to make conscious choices** when it comes to fashion.
- **Innovation and Creativity:**
 - Sustainable clothing **often involves innovative design and creative use of materials.**
 - This can **encourage creativity and innovation in the fashion industry**, leading to more sustainable and environmentally-friendly solutions.
- **Ethical and Fair Treatment of Workers:**
 - Sustainable clothing brands **often prioritize fair and ethical treatment of workers, including fair wages and safe working conditions.**
 - This can **help to promote social justice and reduce exploitation** in the fashion industry.

What are the Challenges with Sustainable Clothing in India?

- **Lack of Awareness:**
 - Many people in India are **not aware of the benefits of sustainable clothing**, including the environmental and social impacts. This lack of awareness makes it difficult for sustainable clothing to gain traction in the Indian market.
- **High Cost:**
 - Sustainable clothing is often **more expensive than traditional clothing, due to the cost of eco-friendly materials** and ethical labor practices. This high cost can be a barrier for many people, especially those on lower incomes.
- **Limited Availability:**
 - Sustainable clothing options are **still limited in India, with many people not knowing where to find eco-friendly and ethical brands.** This lack of availability makes it difficult for consumers to make sustainable choices.
- **Cultural Preferences:**
 - Indian consumers have a **preference for certain styles and materials that may not be eco-friendly or sustainable.** For example, cotton and silk are popular materials in India, but they can be resource-intensive to produce sustainably.
- **Supply Chain Challenges:**
 - The **supply chain for sustainable clothing in India can be complex**, with challenges in **sourcing** eco-friendly materials, ensuring ethical labor practices, and maintaining quality standards.
- **Infrastructure Challenges:**
 - India faces challenges with waste management and water scarcity, which can make sustainable clothing production and distribution more difficult.
- **Limited Government Support:**
 - While there are some government initiatives to support sustainable clothing in India, the **support is still limited**, which can hinder the growth of the sustainable clothing industry.

How can India promote sustainable clothing?

- **Rationalisation of the Cost Structure:**
 - Brands can incentivize sustainable practices in their supply chain by promoting cost

savings through optimized production methods and waste reduction.

- **Legitimate Endorsement by Bollywood and Sports ambassadors:**
 - The endorsement of sustainable clothing by popular Bollywood and sports figures can help increase awareness and incentivize sustainable clothing among the general public.
- **Maintaining a Circular Economy of Fashion:**
 - **Brands can incentivize circularity in the fashion industry** by promoting the recycling, reuse, and repurposing of clothing and textiles, which reduces waste and promotes sustainability.
- **Setting up a Zero-Carbon Production and Supply Chain:**
 - Brands can **incentivize a zero-carbon production and supply chain by promoting the use of [renewable energy](#)**, low-impact materials, and eco-friendly packaging, which reduces the carbon footprint of the fashion industry.
- **Nurturing Artisanship:**
 - Brands can **incentivize the nurturing of artisanship by supporting local artisans and craftspeople**, promoting traditional craftsmanship, and investing in training and development programs.
- **Incentives in the Fashion Industry:**
 - **Financial rewards such as bonuses, commissions, and profit-sharing plans can motivate designers**, manufacturers, and retailers to increase their sales and improve their profitability.
 - For example, designers may receive a percentage of the sales of their clothing lines or a bonus for meeting specific sales targets.

Drishti Mains Question

What are the key challenges in promoting sustainable clothing in India, and how can they be addressed to create a more environmentally responsible and socially conscious fashion industry?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. The term 'Intended Nationally Determined Contributions' is sometimes seen in the news in the context of (2016)

- (a) pledges made by the European countries to rehabilitate refugees from the war-affected Middle East
- (b) plan of action outlined by the countries of the world to combat climate change
- (c) capital contributed by the member countries in the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
- (d) plan of action outlined by the countries of the world regarding Sustainable Development Goals

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- Intended Nationally Determined Contributions is the term used under the UNFCCC for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in all countries that signed the Paris Agreement.
- At COP 21 countries across the globe publicly outlined the actions they intended to take under the international agreement. The contributions are in the direction to achieve the long-term goal of the Paris Agreement; "to hold the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C, and to achieve net zero emissions in the second half of this century." Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.

