

## USE OF TEXTILE WASTE IN GENERATING INCOME FOR EMPOWERMENT

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### ABSTRACT

With the changing world and developing modern thoughts on Textiles today there is tremendous impact on Textile Industry of India. Changed ideology on concept of waste generation along with worldwide concern for environmental depletion has resulted in improved working conditions of laborers. This change has brought along aware of new thought towards recycling and reusing textile waste in making redesigned articles and garments by involving rural sector and enabling them to generate income to have satisfactory livelihoods. This paper aims at recognizing and enumerating various opportunities made available to large number of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. The study also highlights how different sectors of society have been benefitted by using textiles wastes gathered from textile industry and consumers end and is converted into usable articles of daily use. This tremendous development has led to the empowerment of various rural and weaker sections by enabling them earn at their own and become self-independent. They have been benefitted by various projects aiming at providing them opportunities to make best use of their talent and feel empowered after being able to generate income for themselves.

**Keywords:** *Waste, Recycling, Upcycling, Empowerment, Scraps, Rewear, Empowerment*

### INTRODUCTION

Waste is a very common term and we create different types of wastes in our daily life. Waste is a kind of thing that you don't want to produce but produce unwanted. It has a great economic impact from the production process to the consumer end. Wastage is a big term for the manufacturers like textile or clothing manufacturers in their production process. So textile wastage can be defined as the material that becomes unusable or worthless after the end of the production process of any textile product. Textile wastage can come from different textile manufacturing departments like spinning, weaving, dyeing, finishing, garments manufacturing and even from the consumer end. Today textiles are one of the fastest growing waste products and also most recyclable. Textile waste is material deemed un-useable for its original purpose by the owner. This Textile waste can be made into fabrics that are even better than the original. This includes a process of textile recycling which is method of reusing or reprocessing used clothing, fibrous material and clothing scraps from the manufacturing process.

### OVERVIEWS

Today with the changing time, use of textile waste has proved to be one of the major factors contributing towards empowerment. A research titled "**16-Y/O Up cycles Waste Fabric Into Covers, Helps Rural Women Earn Rs 700/Week**" conducted by Ridhi Aggarwal (February 19, 2021) published at "thebetterindia.com" revealed how a teenager stepped up to upcycle textile waste so as to reduce its environmental impact. During the pandemic induced lockdown, this teenager, Sameera Jalan, a 16-year-old from Gorakhpur, in UP, founded PinThread, an initiative that teaches rural women and children of domestic help how to convert waste fabric into useful items like laptop covers, pencil cases and more. As a result, girls and young women familiar with sewing and stitching were trained to stitch finished products like masks, laundry bags, organizers, pouches, etc. by using textile waste. This provided long term benefits in upgrading the skills of those females and kept them going further. This research ended up with the list of products they could possibly stitch from waste fabrics collected from boutiques. Working with the waste fabric was a new concept for all of them, but new ideas and motivation helped them to come up with the ways to stitch together different pieces of fabrics to make finished products that would also bring in income. This activity resulted in shaping their thinking process, as it helped them understand their skills better, and also how to use those skills to generate income and become self-independent.

Another example is of Kiran Mandal, an 18-year-old girl, who couldn't attend college during the 2020 lockdown. Even though she spent some of her time doing household chores, she felt a lot of her time was wasted doing nothing. But dedicating 2 hours of her day to PinThread daily, in the last few months, has been her light at the end of the tunnel, when she realized that her experience of using waste fabric to create better, usable products left her feeling empowered to know that she was earning.

Another research conducted by Shweta Sharma (February 18, 2017) titled **How Waste Fabric Became a Tool for Women's Empowerment** highlights a digital professional Tanushri Shukla who had been observing a daily occurrence in her family's garment production company where kilos of fabric ended up in the waste bin at end of each day. She thought

of transforming such scrap, known as 'chindi' in the tailoring community, into something beautiful and useful. After toying with the idea for a long time, she finally decided to turn it into reality and launched Chindi – a Mumbai-based enterprise that works with marginalized women to help them earn a living through crafts. Her idea empowered women and made them financially independent and satisfied. They created handmade products by up cycling textile waste taken from t-shirt factories and sewing units. Main aim here was to bring slower conscious approach to the fast paced fashion industry to bring empowerment.

A study on “**‘CHINDI’ OR TEXTILE WASTE PRODUCTS OF PANIPAT, INDIA – DYNAMISM OF EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES**” by Sikka and Brar (August,2018) gave an idea that most of Panipat’s recycled fabrics have been crafted into limited number and type of products. The window of opportunity that has opened up globally is the emergence of a high end market for standardized, appealing work-of-art form of clothing and furnishings that can find their way into many an up market home. Recycling and using wasted textiles for producing more new clothes has proved beneficial to all those unskilled and semi-skilled workers who could learn something new and start earning at their own. However the talented designing capacities need to channelize their capabilities to create recycled products having worldwide acceptance and demand.

Bairagi (2018) published a paper on “**Recycling of Post-Consumer Apparel Waste in India: Channels for Textile Reuse**”. It was observed that almost half of the respondents of the survey in India would like to discard the clothes that are no more in use. The donated clothing mostly consists of upper wears. The channels of post-consumer recycling of clothes are mostly NGOs who use it for charity or up-cycle it to new products using a community of artisans, who work for their livelihood. At present there are few Indian brands that create designer products by recycling of post-consumer apparel waste. The fibers from the shredded clothing are generally used as fillers for mattress, pillows, cushion, etc. in the unorganized sector or converted to recycled yarns. Additionally organized channels of recycling also need to be developed by the private labels to prevent clothing from being discarded in the waste and to encourage efficient recycling of post-consumer apparel in India.

A research paper on “**Awareness Generation among Women for value Addition of Post-Consumer Textile Waste**” by Babel and Mehta (2019) rooted in the traditions of Indian culture and religion. This acted as a tool to revive the past practices of most advantageous utilization, reutilization and recycling of post-consumer textile waste. Utilizing waste by reducing, reusing and recycling are the most powerful way by which individuals, households, institutions and businesses can protect their communities and the environment. Women are the one who designs and sews clothing material into value added articles or finished product. Through tailoring skill to make creative, stylish and contemporary designs as per the market demands by using post-consumer textile waste. Hundred respondents engaged in stitching of women wears and ready to give responses for the present study were selected purposively from Udaipur city to collect information type of articles and designing skill used for utilization of post-consumer textile waste. Post-consumer textile waste are low cost raw materials and many Indian craft enterprises are also adapting traditional skills to create eco products, by reclaiming waste, recycling it and extending the life of a material, and object. It can be used by women entrepreneurs to start a small scale business.

### **REUSE, REDUCE, RECYCLE, REPEAT**

So what actually happens to the textiles after the customers discard them in the recycling boxes? “The clothes are then segregated into three categories: Re-wear (clothes that can be worn again are marketed worldwide as second-hand); Reuse (old clothes and textiles that are no longer suitable to wear are converted into other products, such as cleaning cloths); Recycle (textiles that can't be reused get a new chance as textile fibers or are used to manufacture products such as damping and insulating materials for the auto industry)”. A Conscious Collection was launched in 2018, which was made using environmentally smarter materials and came marked with a green hang tag. This whole process of Recycle,Reuse,Reduce and Repeat is completed by number of male and female workers in any textile unit which gives them an easier approach towards working in and for small as well as big textile waste management projects. As a result, this semi-skilled labour is trained to reshape the textiles waste into products of daily usage with which they can earn their livelihood and generate income.

### **RECYCLING VS UPCYCLING**

Recycling /upcycling play a major role in the sustainability criteria of economic, environmental and social dimensions. They underwrite a closed loop model which funds the notion of "for all forever" in a globe of finite resources. For the fashion sector recycling contributes to the elimination of waste through reuse of materials and finished garments, conservation of the environment in particular reduction in landfill and pollution through redirection of waste to alternative uses and preservation of natural resources including water and natural virgin fibers through a model in which the same materials can be used over and over again. This process of Recycling offers enormous potential for innovation in recycling technologies in addition to economic stimulus and employment.

Recycling is finding another use for an existing garment or in the case of textiles it sometimes also means converting (waste) into reusable materials.

Upcycling however includes the performance of value added activity on the material or disassembled garment in such a way as to create a product of higher quality or value than the original. In upcycling the new life cycle commences with a design and may require a complete manufacturing cycle as with a new product. The time frame for up cycling can be lengthy to allow for sourcing, disassembly and reconstitution. But in the end both are primarily being used in Textile Industry today so as to bring most and best out of discarded waste.

Goonj has become known name in Textile Waste Recycling. It is an NGO working in almost 21 states of India. Useful product like sanitary napkins are produced after recycling waste clothes. This project involves more than 500 volunteers and also runs infrastructure and local development projects in villages and slum areas so as to provide them best opportunities to earn their livelihood and generate income for their families.

### **CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN ENTERPRENUERS IN TEXTILE INDUSTRY**

In Today's world, women entrepreneurs are playing an important role and have become an integral part of business environment for their economic as well as social progress. But unfortunately women are still not getting equal status in some areas. If they become entrepreneurs, they can contribute a lot for development of textile industry. At some places it is found that if women workers are short male workers would get higher wages for completing same task if given to them. Such discrimination continues to exist in terms of gender in Textile Industry even today. This leads them to face a major challenge of discrimination at their work place. Other such problems include lack of family support, lack of confidence and faith and also improper and insufficient finances for starting their own entrepreneurs or small scale units. Sometimes they are not properly educated and so can't cop up with the existing environment at their work place. At times they lack in getting proper training due to insufficient sources and outlets.

### **GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN EMPOWERING THE RURAL WORKERS**

Women's development has been a priority in various sectors particularly in small scale industries. The government and non-government bodies have started paying more attention to women economic contribution through self-employment and business ventures. Various development programs are conducted to facilitate and support women and rural workers so that they are able and capable of generating income from those little ventures. The main aim is to ensure training plus income generating schemes and opportunities for needy and weaker section of society. Special incentives and concessions are given to women entrepreneurs. At present government has over 27 schemes to help women find necessary environment to develop their own entrepreneurs and become self-reliant and empowered.

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

Waste if properly managed in a right manner can be converted into a resource. Textile waste is a material deemed unusable for its original purpose by its owner. Recycling of textile waste is the method of reusing or reprocessing used clothing, fibrous material and clothing scraps from manufacturing process. Best utilization after recycling of textile wastes has resulted in formation of those textiles which are proving rather better than their original textiles.

Study concludes that textile waste if managed properly can become a source of income generation to various sections of the society. Various projects like Goonj, Pinthread, and Chindi are the major steps taken at private levels to upgrade the management and usage of textile waste in best possible manner. These developing projects have involved so many unskilled and semi-skilled workers by giving them opportunities to make best use of their talents and feel empowered by generating income for their livelihood.

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