



Sustainable Utilisation Of Dead Stock And Damaged Handloom Sarees For The Welfare Of Weavers

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Abstract: Weavers are one of the backbones of the Indian economy, contributing not only to livelihoods but also to the preservation of our cultural heritage. Despite their creativity and skill, they face numerous challenges in their day-to-day lives. Every saree they weave is a product of deep thought and effort, where the mind and heart work together to create timeless designs. The weaving process is labor-intensive, often requiring the combined efforts of entire families. Depending on the design and structure, a saree can take anywhere from two days to several weeks to complete. Women, too, contribute significantly, weaving sarees during their leisure hours. Tamil Nadu, in particular, is renowned for its handloom traditions, producing a wide variety of sarees such as Kanjeevaram silk, Arani pattu, Chettinadu cotton, Madurai sungadi, Chinnalapattu and Kovai cotton. While the government provides various welfare schemes, weavers continue to face hardships, especially when sarees remain unsold. Dead stocked sarees often suffer damage, leading to financial losses for both weavers and outlets. To address this, proposed a system where unsold or slightly damaged sarees are collected, sorted, and creatively repurposed. These revived products can then be reintroduced into the market, ensuring income for weavers while minimizing wastage. This initiative would not only support the weaver community but also promote sustainable production, circular economy practices, and zero-waste principles in the textile sector. By valuing every saree and finding ways to extend its life cycle, we can safeguard the livelihood of weavers and preserve the rich tradition of handloom weaving. Dead stocked Sarees from Shops to Cyclic Economy.

Keywords: Creativity, Challenges, Handloom, Weaving, Sustainable, Circular economy

I. INTRODUCTION

India is famous for handloom weavers. Especially in Tamil Nadu we have lots of handloom weavers who weave different varieties of sarees. Tamil Nadu is famous for handloom sarees and there are many government sector societies who rise and help the welfare of weavers. For each and every saree they take minimum three days to produce a saree. There are large varieties of sarees from cotton, silk, silk cotton, etc. Tamil Nadu government also supports our weavers to uplift their lifestyle in many ways. After the sarees are woven the weavers supply the sarees to government societies and also some of the shop purchase that directly too. The government sector provides the yarn to the weavers to produce the sarees according to their need of structure, design and colour combinations. Then the sarees are brought back by the societies of government then supplied to government outlets like Co-optex, Sarvodaya, Retail shops etc. Here the sarees are displayed for customers.

The collection of sarees is shown for customers and sometimes few pieces can become unstocked because of rejection in customer point of view, colour fading and few slight damages. Then it will be given for discount sales by the outlets. After that also most of the sarees are stocked in godown if there are no chances of selling. This will be stocked for many months or years and it will be a loss when it is available in huge quantity. The

yarns cannot be reused again. Here this proposal is about going through the fabrics where it can withstand for some years and reuse and recreating the sarees for sustainable development. The stocked are of no income to the shop's, societies and weavers unless sold through discounts. Taking that in mind the sarees are purchased and recreation is done on sarees by doing some embellishment or creating some garment with trend setting design. Even the support of society can be taken for sales of recreated designs for marketing and that too can add values to the handloom weavers to get income through these stocked and damaged sarees. The product developed out of these stocked and damaged sarees can minimize the waste and the income from that also enhance the welfare of the weavers. Sometimes keeping in mind about zero wastage future designers like us can evolve a new brand. Next to agriculture, weavers are the person who put full effort in the production. This idea can pave a way for reduction of wastage in textile field to the welfare of the weavers and create a circular economy too.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Indian handloom and handicrafts industry is one of the world's oldest cottage industries and continues to play a vital role in the country's economy. Positioned as the second-largest source of employment after agriculture, it provides livelihood to millions of people across India (Anil Kumar, 2025). This sector is not only an economic driver but also a vibrant expression of India's cultural heritage and tradition. With unique strengths such as low capital investment, minimal dependence on external power sources, eco-friendliness, and adaptability to changing consumer preferences, the handloom industry stands as a model of sustainable production. Indian handwoven textiles, renowned globally for their richness and diversity, trace their origins back more than 5,000 years, reflecting a legacy of craftsmanship that continues to endure in the modern world.

The apparel industry is among the largest generators of waste, driven by the constant introduction of new patterns, products, and styles to attract consumers. However, creation and consumption in this sector are often accompanied by significant contamination and waste. Continuous purchasing of garments has led to an accumulation of unwanted or unused textiles, commonly referred to as post-consumer waste. This category includes clothing and household textiles discarded when individuals no longer find them useful.

To address this challenge, the "3Rs"—Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle—have been recognized as fundamental strategies for sustainable waste management. Reduce emphasizes lowering consumption and curbing waste at the source; Reuse promotes alternative applications of existing materials to extend their lifecycle; and Recycle involves reprocessing waste into new products, thereby reducing the demand for virgin resources. Within the apparel industry, recycling often manifests as refashioning old garments into new, creative designs that are not only sustainable but also unique and appealing (Gupta and Khare, 2012).

In recent years, upcycling has emerged as a more innovative approach. Dr. Yogesh Bokil (2019) defines upcycling as the transformation of by-products, waste, or unwanted materials into products of higher aesthetic, functional, or environmental value. Unlike conventional recycling, which can lead to downgraded material quality, upcycling enhances value by producing items that are durable, creative, and environmentally beneficial. Closely linked to regenerative design principles, upcycling supports both ecological and social well-being.

Historically, in many developing countries, including India, upcycling and reuse were not trends but necessities, practiced to extend material life and minimize costs. Old fabrics, packaging, and household items were routinely repurposed, a practice now increasingly recognized as an example of sustainable living. In contrast, in industrialized nations, upcycling has gained traction more recently as part of the eco-fashion movement, offering an alternative to the wasteful patterns of fast fashion. By prioritizing resource efficiency and long-term value, upcycling aligns strongly with the circular economy model, where materials remain in use through cycles of repair, reuse, and redesign.

Beyond sustainability, upcycling also holds emotional and cultural significance. Sarees, for example, often embody personal histories, festivals, and memories of the women who wore them. When repurposed into quilts, bags, or garments, these textiles preserve stories while taking on new forms, ensuring continuity of both heritage and utility. This cultural dimension enhances the relevance of upcycling in India today, where conscious fashion and sustainable living are increasingly valued.

Scholars have also demonstrated the potential of upcycled fashion products. Kaur and Kaur (2014), for instance, explored eco-fashion initiatives in Ludhiana by developing accessories from leftover Zari and brocade fabrics, they found that decorative techniques such as patchwork, appliqué, beadwork, and mirror work enhanced product appeal, while three-color combinations emerged as the most preferred design approach. Such experiments show how waste can be transformed into marketable, aesthetic products aligned with sustainable fashion practices.

The textile industry, long reliant on a linear economy, contributes significantly to pollution and landfill accumulation. However, sustainable alternatives—such as recycling, redesigning, restoring, repairing, upcycling, downcycling, and reusing—are now increasingly emphasized as pathways to a circular economy. Aishwariya (2020) highlights the crucial role of consumers in this shift, noting how “green consumerism” has reduced textile waste while promoting eco-friendly practices. This underscores the importance of educating consumers about their choices and integrating sustainability into daily life.

In the context of fashion, the saying “Old Wine in a New Bottle” aptly reflects the potential of combining traditional textiles with modern design innovation. As Jyothi (2019) observes, traditional Indian textiles offer immense opportunities to experiment with new styles and techniques while retaining their ethnic essence. This opens possibilities for developing contemporary yet culturally grounded eco-fashion products that harmonize heritage with modern sensibilities.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research work is undertaken through few steps such as

A. Collection and Segregation

The process begins with the identification of marketplaces and analysis of their deadstock. Sarees that remain unsold for more than a year or are considered out of trend are collected. These sarees are then segregated based on their usability, as shopkeepers identify and classify the slow-moving or obsolete stock.

B. Sorting into Categories

The collected sarees are further sorted into the following categories:

Mint Condition – Sarees in excellent condition, suitable for direct resale.

Minor Defects / Old Stock – Sarees with slight imperfections or outdated styles, which can be repurposed or upcycled.

Damaged / Unsellable – Sarees beyond reuse, directed towards recycling processes.

IV. RESULT

It is observed that sarees offer multiple opportunities in the context of sustainability:

- Unlike fast-fashion garments, sarees are durable, versatile, and timeless in appeal.
- Dead-stocked sarees can be repositioned as valuable resources instead of being treated as waste.
- Their inherent qualities make them highly adaptable for reuse, redesign, resale, and recycling, supporting a circular fashion economy.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Next to agriculture, weaving is one of the most effort-intensive professions in India. By implementing this initiative, we can reduce textile waste, uplift weavers' livelihoods, and create a sustainable model that combines tradition with innovation. This proposal not only enhances the welfare of weavers but also paves the way for a circular economy in the handloom sector. Taken together, these perspectives illustrate that upcycling is not merely an environmental necessity but also a cultural and emotional practice. By leveraging India's rich textile traditions and aligning them with principles of sustainability and circular economy, upcycling offers a viable pathway toward reducing waste while creating meaningful, marketable fashion innovations.

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