



Tishman Environment  
and Design Center



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# Reweaving the Future



By Anurag Jain

*You see, when weaving a blanket, an Indian woman leaves a flaw in the weaving of that blanket to let the soul out- Martha Graham*

Haneef Ansari, a weaver living in a small town of North India, acquired the skill of making handmade fabrics from inheritance. He never misses a chance of boasting about the curtains and bed sheets his forefathers made for renowned people of the past, and how he is still managing to keep the art alive throughout all these years. But things have changed for him within the past years despite of his astounding skills of making handmade fabrics. “I am facing a bit of trouble buying food,” admitted Ansari. The only earning member of family of six, Ansari’s income from weaving cotton fabric is ₹500 in a week (\$7.73 dollars a week). “I won’t be surprised if it drops to even more,” he predicted darkly. He is giving his best to make ends meet with a desire to send his kids to private school for education so they don’t have to work in the inherited business of handmade fabrics.

The Indian textile industry has a long history of poor pay and poor working conditions. The mechanized part of the textile industry directly competes with the 4.3 Million Indian handloom workers. Thus, a lot of them have been put out of business. Recent estimates hold that about 57% of all Indian weavers now live below the poverty line, and many of them are burdened by debt.



With incredible growth in mechanized textile industry, India is the second largest textile manufacturer in the world. Besides being a prominent player in textile manufacturing, India also holds a top position in textile recycling. A significant portion of the value added across each stage of manufacturing is lost during the traditional recycling process. This essentially means that most textile waste is 'down-cycled' into products such as blankets and insulation material. In the quest of finding solution to these issues, Prasanna Colluru, MBA graduate from Rotterdam Erasmus University, and I have been successfully able to design the process and technology to create apparel grade handmade fabric from the textile waste that comes from the industry. The project is supported by The Netherlands

based social enterprises, Enviu and Sympany. In respect to the age old craft of making handmade fabric called Khadi and to the handloom sector, the process is named *Khaloom*.

Khaloom offers a solution to the large volume of textile waste and the stressful living conditions of handloom workers in India. This social enterprise produces sustainable fabric made from recycled textile by using the traditional Indian hand- spinning and handloom weaving techniques. In this way, we add value to waste, creating high-quality fabrics that can be injected back into the primary apparel value chain.



The process of Khaloom starts with collecting waste from garment manufacturing factories. After in-

house sorting, the waste is sent to shredding units to convert it into fibre with the characteristics similar to virgin cotton. The fibre is sent to artisans spread all across India for spinning. Since, every region has a distinct style of hand spinning; Khaloom has a rich portfolio with different looks and textures of yarn. Once yarn is procured, it is sent to in-house weaving unit to get fabric made as per the specification from the client. The whole process is designed to keep the carbon-footprint minimal with major focus given on making the process ethical.

### **Two birds with one stone: Saving water and the craft of fabric making**

Right now every two million meters of Khaloom's fabric saves 1504 million litres of water. This is about twice the amount of water Nigeria, Ethiopia and Egypt combined drink in a day.

Using post-production waste cotton instead of new cotton does not only save a lot of water, but also money. Money that can be invested in employing craftspeople: reviving indigenous manufacturing techniques instead of using completely mechanized processes.

The challenge is to strike a balance between a competitive price and social and environmental impact.



When customers order larger volumes they expect a lower price.

Khaloom is a process devoted to endorse the worthiness of the weaver, the maker, and their environment. By carrying out their craft of the artisans, they will be empowered to create beauty in their product, and their community. Handloom is engrained in the Indian culture and experienced as a profession of pride and worth. By using the materials otherwise wasted, our process is highly respectful of the environment.



*Anurag Jain has been managing the India operations of Khaloom and is associated with project from the beginning with the capacity of Project Consultant of Enviu. He has an undergraduate degree from National Institute of Fashion*

*Technology, New Delhi and has an experience of 3 years in garment manufacturing and e-commerce. Anurag has opted out from the project Khaloom and is currently a student of Strategic Design and Management (M.S.) in Parsons School of Design.*



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