

A blue and white striped bag with a wide strap, featuring a pair of sunglasses hanging from the top handle.

**Soumya Annapurna
Kalluri**

The Mumbai brand upcycles denim – both post-consumer and industrial – to make bags and jewellery. Having repurposed as many as 3,500 pairs of jeans till date, they now also offer to take back your denims to create awareness about fast fashion and upcycling. “Before I started Dwiij in 2018, I was an automobile engineer looking for a sustainable lifestyle,” says Kalluri, the founder. She zeroed in on denim because its manufacturing uses the most resources and chemical processes. “We also encourage corporate green gifting to spread awareness,” she says. The products include slings, duffels, totes, backpacks, and jewellery. From ₹350 onwards, on dwiijproducts.com.



**Shriyans Bhandari and
Ramesh Dhama**

Discarded shoes find a new lease of life with this self-sustaining brand. The brainchild of two former athletes – Bhandari, 24, and Dhami, 26 – Greensole was established in 2014 to tackle the problem of shoes piling up in landfills. They recycle the soles (remelted and moulded, with uppers made from rewashed canvas) to create new collections for men and women. From sneakers with abstract prints to slip-ons, there's plenty to choose from. A part of the revenue also goes towards refurbishing and donating footwear to children in need. From ₹799 onwards, on greensole.in.



Sruti Ashok

Like the textile industry, leather factories also generate plenty of waste. Chennai-based Ashok, 28, whose family makes premium Italian leather bags for brands overseas, decided to do something about it. Her 18-month-old label "uses leather scraps and leftover material to fashion bags and accessories". Ashok keeps her handmade designs minimal so as to reduce further wastage. Her collections include clutches, totes and more. From ₹850 onwards, on inaistory.com



Vibitha Ida Edward

When it comes to upcycling, designers are true thinking out of the box. Edward, who hails from a Chennai-based family of button makers, knows first-hand the sheer number that are discarded in production. "Even as a child I'd put them to crafty use," she says. Last year, while in Australia, she launched her sustainable brand, which uses buttons and clothing toggles to make jewellery. Like chic dangle earrings from upcycled Burberry coat buttons set in plated gold. "Since I moved back to India a few months ago, I'm keen to use buttons in other accessories, too, including shoes," she says. From ₹900 onwards, on itsvie.com.



Bodements, Mumbai | pant suits made from saris

"A few years ago, when I was travelling in Europe, the aesthetic of vintage garments attracted me," says Saini. "I also realised that our world has enough clothes, and vintage is the future." The stylist, who launched her label last year, has now teamed up with Paris-based Letellier to grow the business. "We'll be celebrating our first anniversary next month, with a pop-up in Mumbai," says the 25-year-old, who is keen to host pop-ups across the country. The clothes are sourced from vintage markets across the world, and include clothing by luxury brands like Yves Saint Laurent and Dior. "The vintage concept is new in India, but it is gaining acceptance among conscientious buyers. We are very particular about our quality checks and most of the clothes have been rarely worn," says Letellier, who mentions an upcycling project with actor Swara Bhasker. "Swara gave us her grandmother's sari and we designed a pant suit that she recently wore to an award function," adds Saini, who offers customised upcycling services. With her experience as a stylist, she states that vintage clothing works well for formal and festive wear. "It is all about how you style it. I recently got a beautiful brocade jacket from Paris, which can be worn with a *kurta* or skirt for a Diwali party." The collection starts from ₹2,000, on bodements.com.



Pomogrenade, Bengaluru | cotton kimonos

The hunt for clothing that was fun yet functional got Kutty, 29 and Umapathy, 33, to start Pomogrenade in 2016. The ethical fashion brand offers clothing made from locally-sourced fabrics and textile waste. “Our focus is to make full use of fabrics discarded by production units for minor defects. We also use our own textile waste to fashion new pieces,” explains Kutty. Their first upcycled line included 50 cotton kimonos that, till date, remain their bestseller. “Ethical fashion is our primary message and upcycling is part of it,” asserts Kutty, who finds customers are first attracted by the style of a garment. But when they learn the story of how it was made, they become more accepting of upcycling. “We make adaptable clothing. For instance, our jacket dress is not only reversible but can be worn in two different ways,” she says. What’s more, the styles offer room for adjustment. “The wearer can adjust the fit. So, if you gain or lose a few pounds, you don’t have to discard it.” Pomogrenade also offers a range of accessories like tote bags and pouches made from waste fabric from their production unit. Priced ₹399 onwards, on pomogrenade.com.

Patch Over Patch, Surat | ruffled scrap jackets

Having studied accessory design at the National Institute of Fashion Technology Kangra (Himachal Pradesh), Parikh, 26, worked with several brands before launching her own label over a year ago. "I am fascinated by the colour effects created by patchwork. I work with textile scraps to enhance the meaning of fabrics," explains the designer, who scours textile mills in Surat for scraps. She retails online, and out of select stores in Goa (Paperboat Collective) and Bengaluru (Go Native). "As a designer, colour and form, and their relationship, are vital to me. The texture, colour and shape of surplus or purposeless industrial fabrics help me compose clear linear geometric patterns," she explains. Her collections include an interesting mix of tops, jackets and shift dresses. A recent design was made without cutting the scraps – so as to retain the true nature of the fabrics. Their ruffled scrap jackets and minimalist dresses are bestsellers. "I revel in surface exploration," says the designer, who retails her collection at ₹1,500 onwards, on [@patchoverpatch_upcycled](https://www.instagram.com/patchoverpatch_upcycled) (Instagram).



I was a Sari, Mumbai | pyjama sets
from saris

Taking an eco-ethical approach to fashion, the label – winner of the first Circular Design Award at Lakmé Fashion Week 2019 – places pre-loved saris at the heart of its style, while empowering women artisans in Mumbai. Founded by Funari, an Italian entrepreneur-turned-social change maker, in 2016, it creates a contemporary line of garments, including tunic sets, coats, skirts, dresses, kaftans and more. They also offer a range of accessories, such as scarves, sarongs, bandanas, bags and shoes. “Where most people see waste, we see value. Where most people see a pile of old saris, we see the potential to create contemporary fashion,” says Funari. Any leftover scraps and fents (imperfect ends of a finished fabric) are donated to an NGO that turns them into sanitary pads. I was a Sari features on Gucci Equilibrium – the Italian luxury brand’s platform that works for social empowerment and commitment to a circular economy – and they transfer knowledge and left-over materials to be upcycled. It isn’t surprising that the label’s fashion-forward designs are finding customers in Europe and North America. New arrivals include chic pyjama sets made from saris. Apparel starts from ₹2,200 while the bags are priced ₹300 onwards. www.iwasasari.com.



At Rimaged — an initiative started by ex-techie Shailaja Rangarajan in 2016 to promote conscious consumption, while creating livelihoods for women — denim waste is reused to make cushion covers, pillow covers and bed spreads. Their online store also offers an assortment of upcycled utility products and clothing. Details: rimaged.com

Upcycle your festive style

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Iro Iro, Jaipur | jackets that're finding fans in Singapore



Hailing from a family that manufactures and exports garments, Goenka, 25, had understood early on how wasteful the textile industry can be. In 2016, she started to research how to make manufacturing systems circular. “If you go back in history, the Indian design philosophy was not to waste,” says the textile designer, who launched her label in December 2017. “I wanted to focus on creating garments [jackets, dresses and full ensembles] using waste materials, with a functional aesthetic.” Using 100% upcycled textile woven by weavers in Govindgarh, a village near Jaipur, her designs are multi-functional, offering “three styles in one purchase”. Each product also comes with the story of how and where it was made. Her ‘MoonWash’ line upcycles silk from local textile markets, which would have otherwise been burned as fuel or sent to landfills. “We also use waste yarns from Khamir, an NGO in Gujarat specialising in hand spinning of indigenous cotton,” she says. Since its inception, the label has upcycled 1,500 kg of waste fabric. “Recently, we’ve also worked to revive the dying art of *pattu*, an extra weft technique from Rajasthan,” says Goenka, who is currently making upcycled jackets for a Singapore-based label. Garments priced from ₹6,000 onwards, on iroirozerowaste.com.



The Local Vintage, Mumbai | silk
button-up shirts

When it comes to sustainable fashion, Newar, 28, feels that while vintage clothing may not be the only solution, it is an important way to get people to change their consumption habits. "Vintage is a big trend internationally, and I've been buying thrifted and second-hand clothing for years now," says the stylist-turned-entrepreneur, Shillong and Mumbai. For her fully curates garments sourced in Shillong. And, yes, there are queries like hygiene issues, and these must be defective or not don't be further from the truth," the quality of fabric dating back to much better, "far superior to what is offered today." "I pick up from fine silks and lace," she adds. Her collection onwards (on Instagram), includes an interesting mix of prints and skirts. The collection of vintage button-down shirts.



Pune | ethnic wear from textile scrap

When the designer launched her label 18 years ago, she was already mindful of what happened to the scrap generated from her garments. “By 2005, we made sure to collect the waste material and sort it by hand, depending on colour, material and size – we weren’t just sweeping it up off the floor,” she says. These pieces are aesthetically assembled on a base of *muli* cotton to create fabric that is then stitched into various garments. “We didn’t want it to look like patchwork, but as a cohesive piece of cloth. We use a lot of hand embroidery techniques to achieve that effect,” explains the 42-year-old designer. Her latest festive collection features burnished gold sequins for an understatedly elegant look, chevron patterns on *lehengas* and fringe detailing on upcycled *dupattas*. Prices upwards of ₹18,000, on [perniasopupshop.com](#), [aashniandco.com](#), and [azafashions.com](#), and her flagship in Pune.



LataSita, Kolkata |
sherwanis from tussar
curtains



This former scribe decided to start her zero-waste fashion label after she became “uncomfortably aware of the exploitative methods practised in the sweatshops supplying my [former] favourite brands, and the staggering amount of pollution created by the industry”. Closed loop since 2012, she creates garments from high-quality textiles sourced from women’s wardrobes. “There are so many saris tucked away in cupboards across the country. Sometimes new ones lie unused for decades, or are worn only once or twice. In using them, I found that not only did they have a charming sense of newness and nostalgia, but the smallest carbon footprint,” explains Nayak, 34, who fashions jackets, dresses, shirts, skirts *et al* from pre-loved clothing. Recently, she made a *sherwani* out of tussar curtains! “Someone brought me her wedding *choli* and 17 pairs of jeans that didn’t fit. We took 12 of these apart and created a fabulous denim jacket,” she says, describing the production process at the label is “intense”. With two lines, prêt – made from sustainable textile, specifically old textile – and custom, she also runs a ‘Send Us Your Saree’ project that has now been running for five years. From ₹1,500, on latasita.in.