

Recording Circular Loops of Use and Re-Use of Clothing & Textiles Adopted by Indigenous Communities in India

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Historically and culturally, clothing and textiles have been considered a valuable resource across households in the Indian subcontinent; rarely discarded, a piece of fabric is maintained with care till its end of life. The journey of a piece of textile or clothing is long and full of several circular loops, wherein time and again in its life, the fabric becomes a source for another textile or product, until it ceases to serve any purpose in its materiality. As a country belonging to the Global South, Indian villages are vast repositories of local knowledge & innovation that remain largely undocumented and inaccessible to the cause and agents of the gradual making of an unsustainable world. The paper is an urgent inquiry into rediscovering the everyday habits and practices of engagement with clothing & textile by indigenous communities in India. As an outcome, the research aims at the creation of story maps comprising visual narratives that document the alternatives these communities adopt, to keep the textile in the circular loop. Other than recording this oral knowledge, the maps will act as a means to explore ways and forms in which repair and repurpose can serve as tools for design longevity.

Repurpose; Reuse; Textiles; Circular loops; indigenous knowledge

About the Author

Pragya Sharma is an Assistant Professor in the Fashion Design department at the Indian Institute of Art and Design (IIAD) in New Delhi, India. As a design mentor, she engages in various capacities – guiding students through a design process, facilitating sessions on visual representation, materials and textiles, costume history, clothing & gender as well as sustainable fashion design. As a researcher, her research practice is very varied and a constantly evolving one, encapsulating different aspects of sustainability including zero-waste design, domestic Indian crafts, documenting community & cultural narratives as well as design pedagogy. She has written and published research papers, conducted workshops as well as spoken at various national and

international conferences and symposia on diverse themes. She constantly tries to bring her research and creative practice to the studio, embedding it as short assignments or workshops within project briefs. As a design practitioner, she manages a small studio wherein she experiments with the techniques of crochet and hand-knitting to design and create contemporary pieces that find function in adornment and lifestyle. This involves working closely with women artisans at not just the creation of products as well as training them in specific techniques.