



# Environment and Sustainability: Innovation and Practises

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**Abstract:** It is true to say that the world is becoming complex and multifaceted day by day with rising tensions of deglobalization and ongoing wars. Survival and Profit making remains as one of the major concerns for various business houses across the nation and for that organizations are focusing on various techno-structural changes within the organization for better health. On the other hand, with the rising level of pollution, nurturing a green environment and crafting a green business is the call of the hour. Environmental consciousness now strikes us almost every day in the current times. Resource limitation concerns and environmental concerns did raise a question on the very concept of sustainable use of assets and pollution. (Wang and Song, 2014) Opinions were that developments pertaining to the economy and pollution reduction could not go hand in hand. Striking a proper balance between constant high consumption of resources in order to develop the economy and at the same time also thinking about eco-friendly environmental concerns is a challenge (Chan et al., 2012). The excessive consumption and usage of the non-renewable resources with an aim of speedy economic developments did adversely affect the environment and raised huge concerns (Atlin and Gibson, 2017).

In the opinion of (Chen, 2008b; Chang, 2011) it is the manufacturing sector across the globe that is the highest waste producing sector. The very concept of Green Innovation can be further bifurcated into green products, green marketing, green processes, and green management that are focused and oriented towards eco-friendly initiatives and work practices like recycling, controlling the pollution emission levels at large (Seman et al., 2019). Gupta, R. (2011) in his study stated that the awareness level amongst the Indian customers are not that much aware about the eco-friendly products and its benefits. Moreover the Indian customers were very less aware about the initiatives taken by companies as such for the cause. Agarwal, Sutra Dhār, S.P. and Agarwal, R. (2020) in their study found that the majority of the respondents in their study are moderately aware of the concept of Sustainability and Green Initiatives.

**Research gaps** found in literature surveys were that very little study has been found which focused on organizations "Green Initiatives" practices with respect to Sustainability and what exactly they were doing to educate the mass population about "Green Products". Secondly, it has been found that the majority of the population in general only have moderate knowledge about the concept of Sustainability, Green Initiatives and Green Products.

**Research objectives** for this study are set as to study the degree and extent of the various green initiatives practices with respect to sustainability practiced by major organizations and also to study the degree and extent of initiatives taken by the organizations to aware the mass populations regarding Green Initiatives and Sustainability.

**Research Methodology:** This Qualitative study is based on secondary data. The secondary data were obtained from various journals, statements, newsletters and social media platforms.

The paper will focus on the innovation and practices of the same in current business context. With respect to the same green initiatives of few organizations like Oracle, Hindustan Unilever, Reliance and Flipkart will be discussed in this chapter as to how these companies are balancing both development on one hand and environmental conscious initiatives on the other hand. Also how such initiatives are contributing towards overall business development which can be used for further study.

Touching in brief upon the grave scenarios of textile wastes and used clothes disposal reality of the fast fashion consumer segment which is adversely affecting the environment.

**Keywords:** Pollution, Resources, Innovation, Practices, Green Business, Sustainability.

**Introduction:** In today's world the word "Sustainability" has become an essence of major business operations. In order to operate by the principles of sustainability; "Green Practices" which emphasizes on adopting principles and processes helps in realizing the goal of sustainability. However lately it has been realized and felt that implementation of green practices in reality is a challenging affair, reasons could be like mobilizing the capital, resources, information flow etc. (G20 Green Finance Synthesis Report, 2016). Now with the advancement of businesses across the world and rise in competition for survival, the extent of natural resources usage has been increased by many folds which in a way does create an adverse effect on the environment. So it is the need of the hour that we use such natural resources in an optimum way so that productions are environment friendly and for that adoption of green business practices by the business houses are necessary.

With increase in population and developments in the field of technology, the usage of various kinds of resources are at an all-time high which does create an adverse effect on the environment. As a result of which both the employees, organization and government jointly have to take certain initiatives which helps in addressing the rising concern. Some of the initiatives by the government are the Green Hydrogen Mission, GOBARdhan (Galvanising Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan Scheme), the Green Credit programme, MISHTI, Amrit Dharohar, and more. Also notably few major business houses in India did take great initiatives and actions with respect to Sustainability and Green Initiatives which the paper deals with in depth.

**Literature Review:** Studies conducted by Ahmad, M. (2016) stated that productivity does gets enhanced with the effective usage of resources, an aim of good will creation in the market with proper planned investment opportunities all directed towards green business practices which will enhance the objectives of sustainable development.

Gupta, R. (2011) in his study stated that the awareness level amongst the Indian customers is not that much aware about the eco-friendly products and its benefits. Moreover, the Indian customers were very less aware about the initiatives taken by companies as such for the cause.

Smith, E.E and Perks, S. (2010) in their study suggested that the General Management Team and HRM Team in an organization must actively take initiatives for promoting various initiatives that promote green causes.

Agarwal, K., Sutra Dhār, S.P. and Agarwal, R. (2020) in their study found that the majority of the respondents in their study are moderately aware of the concept of Sustainability and Green Initiatives. The major factors upon which they worked were eco-friendly packaging initiatives, respondent's awareness about the various symbols and certifications which declares a product as green, the benefit of the same with respect to health

perspectives, consumable and eco-friendly electricity concern, initiatives on plantation of trees, green initiatives by government. So post their study it was revealed that the majority of the respondents were moderately aware about the products which are eco-friendly and also moderately aware about the brands which offered such products.

### **Research Gaps:**

Post conducting a brief literature Review, the gaps identified were:

1. Very less study has been found which focused on organizations “Green Initiatives” practices with respect to Sustainability and what exactly they were doing to educate the mass population about “Green Products”.
2. It has been found that the majority of the population in general only have moderate knowledge about the concept of Sustainability, Green Initiatives and Green Products.

### **Research Objectives:**

1. To study the degree and extent of the various Green Initiatives Practices with respect to Sustainability practiced by major organizations.
2. To study the degree and extent of initiatives taken by the organizations to aware the mass populations regarding Green Initiatives and Sustainability.

### **Research Methodology:**

This Qualitative study is based on secondary data. The secondary data were obtained from various journals, statements, newsletters and social media platforms.

### **A Case from Hindustan Unilever (HUL):**

Hindustan Unilever is a British-owned Indian final good company headquartered in Mumbai. It deals with products like foods, beverages, cleaning agents, personal care products, water purifiers and other FMCG goods.

The company was first established in the year 1931 and at that time it was known as Hindustan Vanaspati Manufacturing Co. Post a merger of the groups in 1956 it got renamed as Hindustan Lever Limited. The company again got renamed in 2007 as Hindustan Unilever Limited.

However being a leading organization in the FMCG sector, it faced high controversies when the organization was accused of dumping highly toxic mercury contaminated waste in regular dumps which contaminated the land and water space of Kodaikanal, India. These were the regular wastes from the productions of mercury thermometers for export around the world. As a result of which the former employees had visible signs of mercury poisoning such as gum and skin allergy and related problems which appeared due to the exposure of mercury level for a prone period of time.

Such incidents does question, the very foundation of Sustainability as a concept and its basic principles which the organisations must follow. Post facing legal obligations the company was forced to clear near about 290 tonnes of dumped mercury waste.



(Pic Source: Wikipedia, The Lake which got contaminated due to prolong dumping of mercury wastes)

Such actions adversely affect the face image of the organisation as well in the market which does take a toll on its revenue and business especially of that region.

Taking lesson from there the organization at present is working continuously for betterment of the society at large through their green initiatives. Currently their target is to:

- Net Zero Emissions for all the products from sourcing to point of sale by 2039.
- Replace fossil-fuel derived carbon with renewable or recycled carbon in all their cleaning and laundry product formulations by 2030.

To reduce the carbon footprint, the organization took notable initiatives like 44 % reduction in total energy consumed (per tonne of production) , 97% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (kg/ tonne of production) , 48 % reduction in water usage (m<sup>3</sup>/ tonne of production) and 55% reduction in total waste generated (kg/tonne of production). This is against the 2008 baseline in manufacturing operations.

### Major Initiatives:

#### 1. Reducing the Greenhouse emissions from refrigeration.

- The organization is continuously rolling out environmentally friendly freezer cabinets that uses hydrocarbons rather than hydrofluorocarbons refrigerators across India. At present they are having 1, 50,000 + freezers.



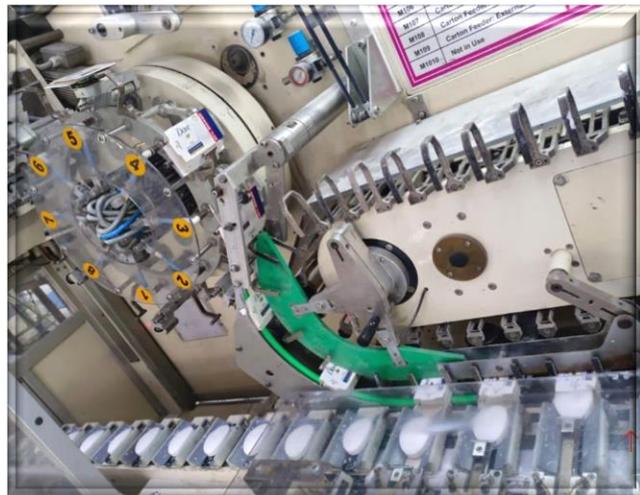
## 2. Plastic Waste Collection and Recovery

- At present the organization is currently having tie-ups with various active NGO's and organizations which collect the wastes and also process the same. Currently the organization collects and safely dispose more wastes and plastics than used in packaging of their products which is a remarkable feat. 1, 00, 000 + tones of wastes has been collected and safely disposed as of in 2022.



## 3. Sustainable Packaging

- At present the organization for its products like Vim, Surf excel, Vaseline and Rim are trying to use the post-consumer used recycled plastics with the aim of eliminating plastic from all soap segments. They have also installed “Smart Fill” stations in their outlets where the consumers can refill their plastic bottles when finished rather than buying a new bottle which causes consumption of more plastic.



#### 4. Awareness Campaigns in association with UNDP

- With the aim of creating a “Plastic Waste Circular Economy”, the organization have tied up United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Together they have rolled out a curriculum for the students in order to create awareness and drive behavioral change on waste segregation and recycling. They have also set up end to end waste management projects called “Swachhata Kendras” in Mumbai for managing the household wastes of nearly 100,000 households.



**82%**

Tomatoes for Kissan ketchup sustainably sourced



**69%**

Tea purchased from sustainable sources



**100%**

Chicory sourced from farmers covered under the Unilever Agriculture code



**95%**

Paper and board for packaging certified as sustainable

Thus we could see from the above initiatives that how an organization in the FMCG sector is doing their part for contributing to the society at large.

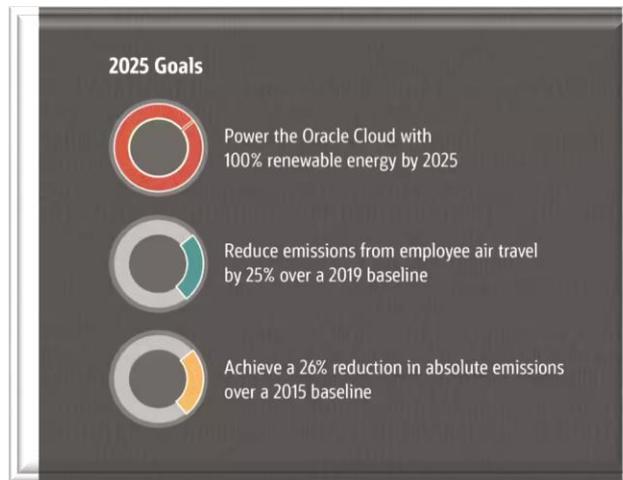
#### A Case from Oracle:

In 2015, Oracle established ambitious targets for decreasing emissions, waste, and the consumption of energy and water across its worldwide facilities, encompassing over 25 million square feet of property. Oracle's 2020 objectives were concentrated on four primary domains: diminishing global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, transitioning to renewable energy resources, diverting waste away from landfills, and curtailing the utilization of potable water. Oracle achieved—or exceeded—those initial three objectives by 2019 and is currently progressing towards attaining the water preservation target by the conclusion of 2024.

Looking ahead, Oracle's targets for 2025 entail a 26% reduction in absolute emissions compared to the 2015 benchmark and a 55% reduction in emissions per unit of energy consumed. Progress is already underway, with total emissions reduced by 20.5% and energy emissions intensity decreased by 42.3% compared to Oracle's initial 2015 target. These objectives adhere to the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi), which establishes emission benchmarks in line with the Paris Agreement on climate change. Oracle is on course to curtail emissions in accordance with the Paris Agreement's original 2° warming scenario while also aligning with the more recent, revised 1.5° scenario. Furthermore, Oracle has established targets to decrease its

consumption of potable water per square foot and waste-to-landfill per square foot by 33% by 2025 compared to 2015 levels.

"We take pride in the achievements we've already realized in fostering sustainable business practices," states Oracle's Chief Sustainability Officer, Jon Chorley. "Yet, the Oracle ethos dictates that upon reaching one goal, we set a more demanding one. Our new 2025 objectives underscore our dedication to sustainability and mirror senior management's commitment to continual improvement in this aspect of our operations."



(Source: Oracle.com)

Oracle Cloud is poised to be a pivotal element in the ongoing sustainability enhancements of the company. To ensure the energy needs for the continuous operation of its data centres, Oracle has established a fresh objective to exclusively power Oracle Cloud with renewable energy by 2025. Currently, Oracle data centres worldwide source 59% of their energy from renewable origins and have attained power usage effectiveness (PUE) levels as low as 1.15 (with 1.0 being the ideal PUE) through efficient utilization, cutting-edge energy management, and advanced cooling technologies.

In Europe, Oracle's data centres in London, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, and Zurich are already fuelled entirely by certified renewable energy. Oracle intends to leverage the insights gained from these markets to replicate similar strategies in its data centres across other regions of the globe. Oracle has established an objective to reach carbon neutrality by the year 2050, along with a commitment to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions (both operational and throughout our supply chain) by 50% by 2030 compared to a baseline set in 2020. This goal has received approval from the Exponential Roadmap Initiative, an endorsed collaborator of the United Nations Race to Zero initiative.

2025 Goals and Progress	
GOALS 2025	PROGRESS <sup>1</sup>
Match 100% energy usage with renewable sources for Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI)	81% OCI renewable energy coverage.
Match 100% energy usage with renewable sources for Real Estate & Facilities (RE&F)	63% RE&F renewable energy coverage.
100% of key suppliers have an environmental program in place	88% of key direct suppliers have an environmental program in place. 88% of key indirect suppliers have an environmental program in place.
80% of key suppliers have emissions reductions targets in place	82% of key direct suppliers have emission reduction targets in place. 79% of key indirect suppliers have emission reduction targets in place.
33% reduction in potable water per square foot	40% reduction in use of RE&F potable water.
33% reduction in waste to landfill per square foot	67% reduction in the use of RE&F waste to landfill.
25% reduction in air travel emissions	84% reduction in employee air travel emissions.

(Source: oracle.com)

Oracle has installed Exelon which is helping its customers reduce their energy consumption using insights through its energy services powered by Oracle Utilities, Big Data, and Analytics solutions.

### Steps taken for sustainable development:

1. Preserving the environment is essential for fostering sustainability. Enterprises, regardless of size, can initiate this process by evaluating their workplaces and premises. Simple methods to promote eco-friendliness include recycling electronic hardware, paper, and other office materials; procuring recycled or environmentally friendly supplies; utilizing LED lighting to minimize energy consumption; minimizing unnecessary travel; and incentivizing carpooling among employees.
2. They have started using solar panels in its operation. The savings benefit the business once it recoups the initial installation costs, while the transition also helps the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Society further benefits because the move to clean energy will add jobs—an estimated 10.3 million net new ones globally by 2030, according to the World Economic Forum.

### A Case Study from Reliance:

At Reliance, Sustainability is viewed as a responsibility of the organization towards environment and society. As a part of their principle, they have included “Product Life Sustainability” which means that the organization should produce goods and services which contribute to the safety and should be sustainable throughout their life cycle. Also, the aspect of “Environment” is one of their core principles where they strive towards respecting, protecting and making serious efforts to restore the environment at large through their services.

As per their annual report of 2022, the organization has about 233 subsidiaries and they try to engage through all their subsidiaries to contribute in terms of sustainability principle. Through means of suppliers, distributors and local communities, government and other entities in the value chain.

With respect to its continuous strive towards a Sustainable environment, the organization took some remarkable steps in attaining the same. Some of them are mentioned below:

- **R|Elan™ – Fusion technologies:** The organization leveraged on the technical front and developed fusion technologies solutions which are created through eco-friendly and sustainable route like moisture management (R|Elan™ Kooltex), thermal insulation (R|Elan™ AirTherm), all-weather comfort (R|Elan™ AllClima) and all of the same are created from waste PET bottles (R|Elan™ GreenGold). So through the same we could see how the organization worked upon the major issues to provide eco-friendly and sustainable solutions. Thus bringing forward the novel commitment of the organization to introduce innovative technologies that promote sustainability.
- **RelWood™ as a Replacement to Wood:** This product offering from Reliance happens to be the substitute product of wood which is again sustainable and eco-friendly. It is known that India has a forest cover area of 21% whereas the demand for wood is 31%. Also, our country India happens to be the largest importer of wood for the rest of the world.

So with such ground breaking initiative by the organization to bring a 100 % substitute product of wood is really commendable. As the very same initiative is directly having effect on sustaining the natural forest cover, recyclable in nature and also it does not release hazardous fumes and gasses with much better quality and resistance than wood. It is said that the products are long lasting and thermoforming friendly which could be the selling point proposition material for those customers who are eco-friendly and sustainability cautious.

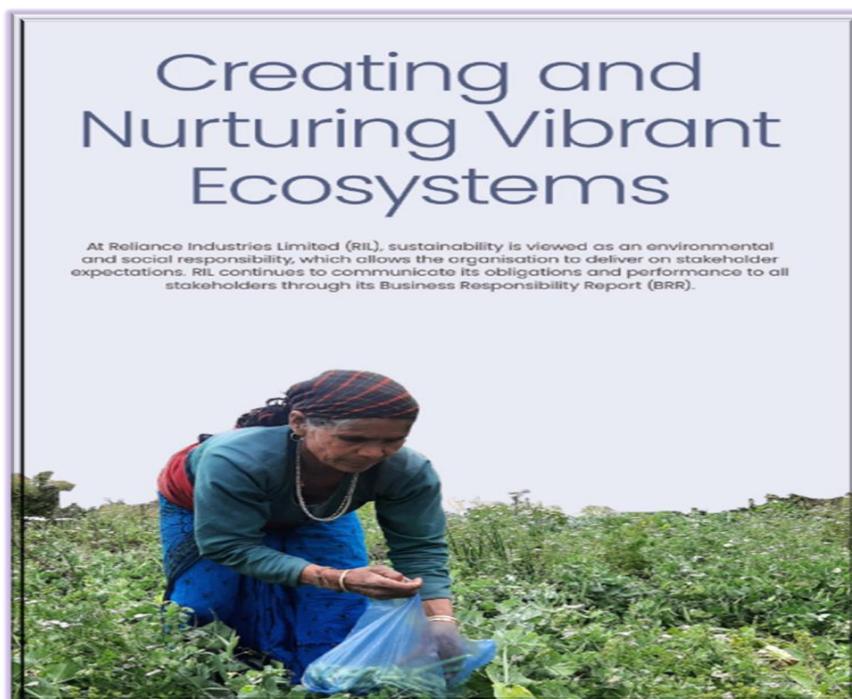
- **Fabric Recycling (PET- Polyethylene terephthalate):** Reliance as an organization is deeply concerned with the increasing post usage consumer products which become wastes. As the very same is highly hazardous for our environment.

Addressing this environmental burden caused due to discarded wastes in the environment, the organization with the help of technology is attempting to segregate the PET from the fabric blends and eventually convert the same to re-usable fabric fibers through cost-effective technologies for producing new fabrics and garments. Also, to improve the valorization process the recovered PET fibers are used as reinforcement fillers in concrete composites for improving the strength of the compression. This is how the organization is striving towards sustainable production and helping in reducing climatic impact.

Reliance in order to promote the principles of a circular economy which are Reduce, Reuse and Recycle have intensively worked on the various waste management initiatives. Some of those initiatives are Recron® Green Gold™ Polyester Staple Fibre (rPSF), Green Polyolefin (gPO) and Waste to Road (W2R). Further to promote the principles of circular economy the various hazardous wastes are recycled as an alternative fuel and raw materials for the cement industry.

By 2035, the target for the organization is to be Net Carbon Zero. For the same the organization has reported an increase of 115% renewable energy consumption in FY 2022-23 as compared with the previous financial year of 2021-22. The company also aimed for setting a 20 GW solar energy generation capacity by 2025 which will be fulfilling the energy requirement. The organization has made significant effort to use bio-energy for bridging the demand and they have replaced 5.3% of energy consumption at their Dahej and Hazira, India sites with green power and green steam with a focus on making CO2 a recyclable resource through means of technology by harnessing photosynthesis biological pathways which will play a pivotal role.

**Some of the Pictorial Representation of Sustainability Practices at Reliance:**





**Note:** Images taken from Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report of 2021-22 and 2022-23]

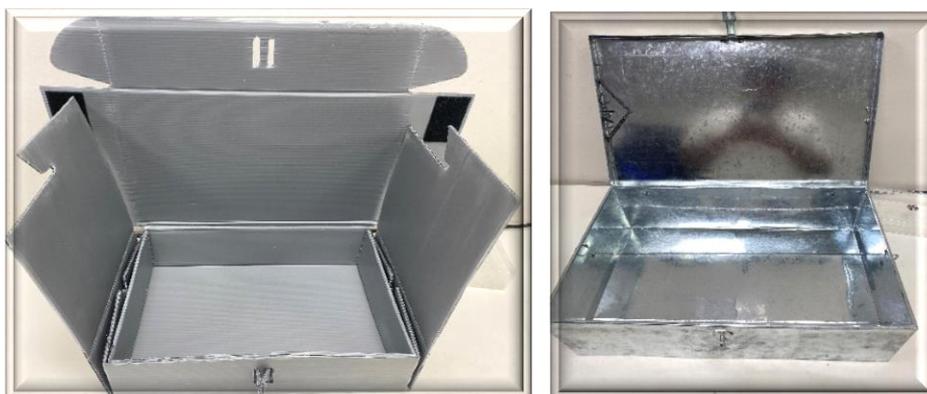


Image of a sample Poly Propylene Box and a Normal Metal Box which is now getting replaced in the industry at large.

The above is another exemplary example that how Reliance as an organization is working extensively where the organization is trying to replace the metal boxes used for transportation of various materials with that of a Poly Propylene boxes. This box is even more resistant than the metal boxes with all anti-tampering features and is made up of fully recycled grade of granules which is again supplied by Reliance only post recycling. These Poly Propylene boxes are having greater life as compared with metal boxes.

So such initiatives by the organization shows that how one organization is using recycled used materials for further use and thus contributing significantly for the noble cause.

**Another Aspect:****The Dark and Grave Scenario of the Textile and Clothing Industry: A Toll on Sustainability.**

Based on 2019 UN reports, the production for global clothing doubled between 2000 and 2014 and is rapidly increasing at a fast pace due to growing needs of the consumers. Initially during 70's, 80's and 90's the consumption was not so high and at such fast pace. People used their garments for a longer period of time but with the advent of time, technology and fashion sense the usage rate of a particular piece of a cloth or the replacement rate has grown considerably. Now for every occasion the consumers' needs new sets of clothes and as a result the discard rates are also increasing.

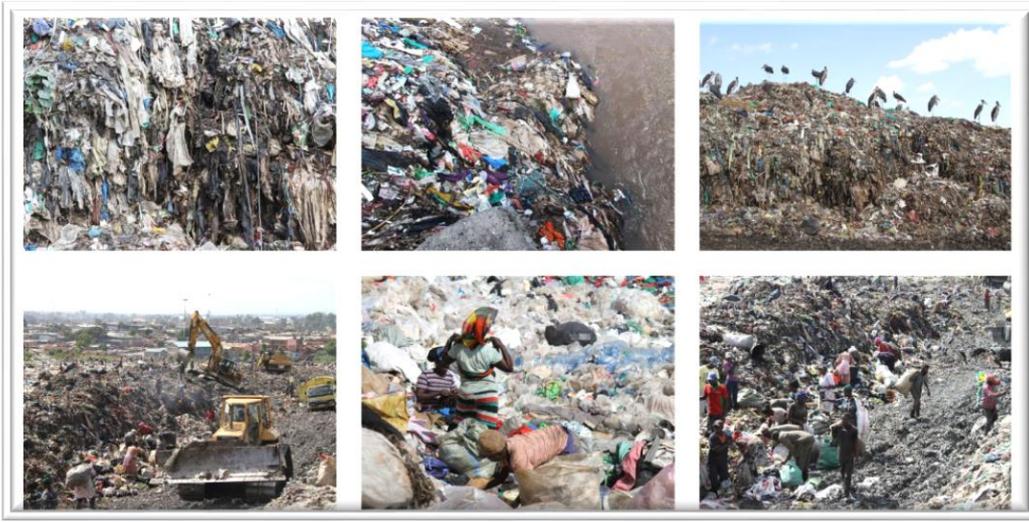
Now such fast rampant usage and discarding of garments leads to huge amount of wastes which is polluting the nature at large and is taking a toll on the public health. The utilization rates of the clothes has decreased by 36% in the last few years.



(Pic Source: Aljazeera, Nov 8<sup>th</sup> 2021)

If reports are to be believed, every year around 59, 000 tonnes of no market value used clothing arrives at Chile which is made in China or Bangladesh and passed through Europe, Asia or United States where some of the dump gets resold at Local markets and the rest gets dumped in the desert as seen from the picture where these dumps are either burnt or sent to overflowing dump sites. The issue arises more as these clothes are not biodegradable and has chemical products so these dumped garments are not accepted in the municipal landfills hence left at these desert areas.

It is believed that the Textile Industry through their wastes contributes for 20 % of the total water waste globally. It is said that to make a pair of jeans requires 7,500 litres of water (2000 Gallon) and whether the clothing piles are left in the open or buried it does release harmful pollutants.



(Pic Source: From the film “Textile Mountain: The Hidden Burden of our Fashion Waste”)

Experts opines that the problem of such discarded textiles and garments are going out of control. As a result of which it now depends on the people and end consumers to remain aware and responsible while consuming and utilising the clothes. Even at times of disposal also they should be aware to know as to where there used garments are going or give away to those organizations only who seriously deals in recycling and circular reuse of these used garments.

### Similar Situation at Bengal.



Pic Source: The Guardian. The Kolkata dump that's permanently on fire: 'Most people die by 50'

Similar situations like that of Chile, Africa is also present throughout India. The authors of this paper resides in West Bengal and throughout their daily journey to various places similar situations are seen.

For instance when moving from Dakhineswar Temple towards Kolkata Airport through Belghoria Expressway a massive garbage dump could be seen from the expressway which is always on fire thus leading to immense air and land pollution. It is believed from sources and reports that nearly 500 tonnes of solid wastes from four municipalities Dum Dum, North and South Dum Dum and Baranagar gets deposited in this area on the approx. 20 acre ground.

Such daily activities does adversely affect the environment at large.

- The residents daily face issues of clean air and breathing problems due to smoke covering the entire area due to garbage's being burnt throughout the day.
- It is also polluting the local water body and the drainage system which is affecting the health in a huge way.
- During rainy season the nearby resident area gets completely water clogged which stays for days and such garbage's at times clutter the drainage systems also.

So these are the few major potential health hazards from such dump yard sites which is affecting the environment and the area where many residents reside. Thus leaving them to prolong chances of sickness and health hazards in the long run.

## **Conclusion:**

Sustainability should always be a social goal for people and business organizations to co-exist. Keeping that in mind the three principles of sustainability which are environmental, economic and social have to be kept in mind especially for all the organizations operating. As through sustainability the major environmental concerns are addressed at large. According to UNESCO, "Sustainability" is a long-term goal whereas "Sustainable Development" refers to the various processes and ways to achieve the same.

Likewise in the above three major cases, one from Hindustan Unilever which is currently the best FMCG player in the market. Secondly, Reliance Industries which is again the best in its segment ranging from Petrochemicals, Refinery, Telecom and Retail segment and Oracle which happens to be the best and world's largest software company. It becomes important that how these three organizations in lieu with their objectives are working on the sustainability policies with their various initiatives which are noble in nature and can be replicated by other business organization as well. So that together holistically the principle and the goal of Sustainability could be achieved.

All though we have seen that in today's scenario manufacturing industries are the biggest waste producing sectors, so here comes the concept of "Circular Economy" which can play a major differentiator in achieving the sustainability goal for those organizations which are in the manufacturing sector, as practiced by Reliance. Another instance which was discussed in brief was about the dark reality of the textile and fast moving garments industry with regards to the discarded wastes from these industry and how the very same is affecting the environment as a whole adversely.

So it has been seen and discussed that on one hand how the major industry giants are working continuously towards achieving the sustainability goals and they have included the sustainability principles religiously in their core principles also. On the other hand we have seen the aftermath of one industry and how their disposal wastes are affecting the balance of the same.

Another major concern area is that in India other than the big organizations, the majority of the MSME enterprises don't practice religiously 100% on the principles of Sustainability. So, it becomes very imperative that such enterprises which comprise the major chunk should think about the same by looking into the ways which other giants in the industry are practicing to bring about a change in the ecosystem.

So Green Practices and Business Augmentation is actually a reality for the major houses but for the MSME enterprises which operate in sub-rural, rural or suburban areas needs support from the government and big organizations on the ways as to how with the help of technology and innovation they are able to bring the changes. Lastly a mass awareness by the enterprises for the end consumers as to how they as an organization is contributing towards the sustainable environment doing their part and how the end consumers can learn, be aware and contribute from their end towards the cause. As at the end it's a joint collaboration where

collectively both the business houses, enterprises and people at large need to come together for a Sustainable Development.

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