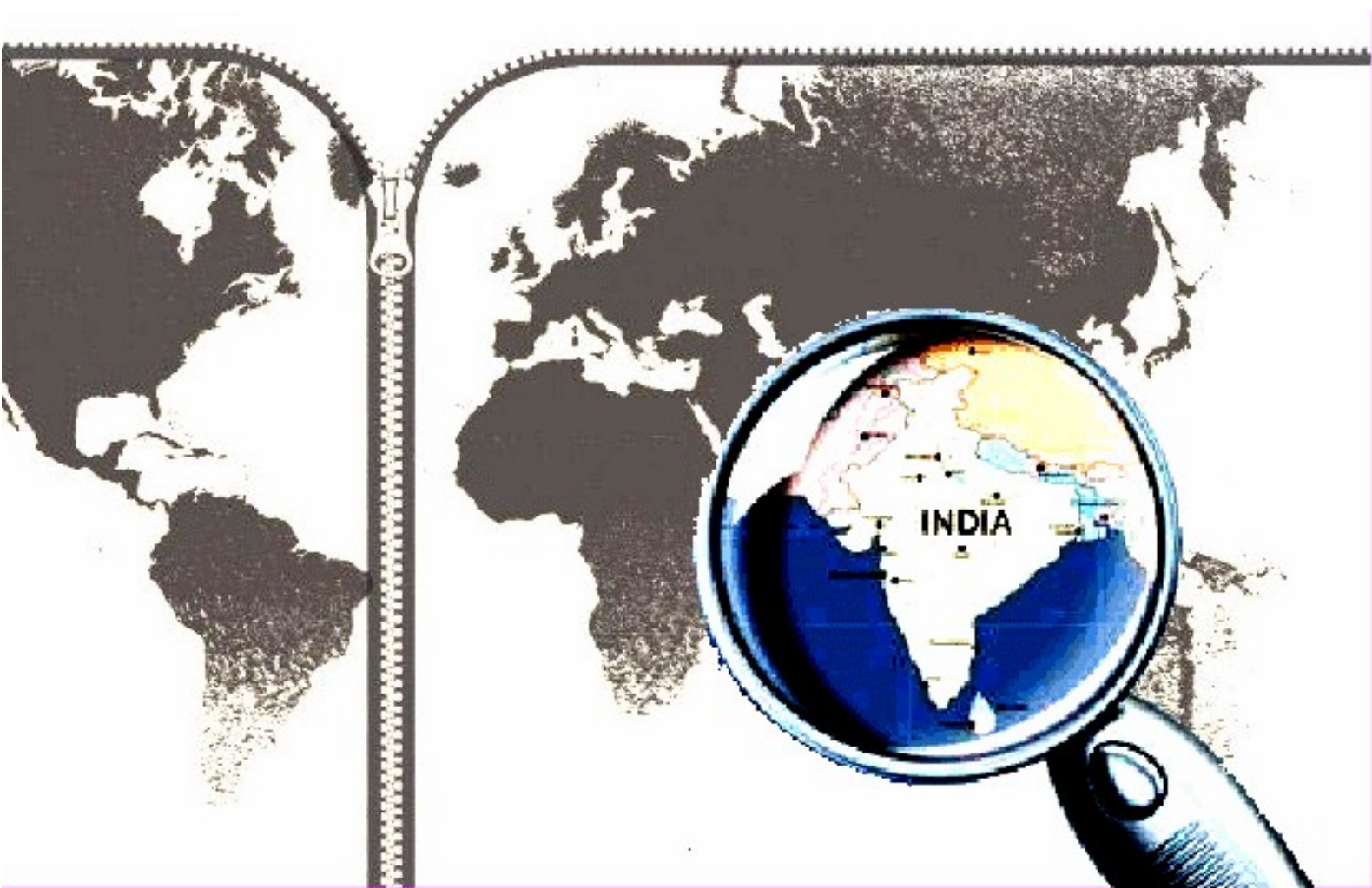


Sourcing ethically from India

An Introductory Guide

***for
micro-enterprises and start ups
in the fashion industry***



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Feedback, critique, and suggestions for improvements, are always welcome via the online contact form available at: <http://shirahime.ch/contact/>.

I hope this document is helpful and answers some of the most burning questions when, as a brand, taking your first steps towards collaborating with an Indian partner.

London, February 2011

Pamela Ravasio

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1 Introduction

Since the trend for off-shoring apparel manufacturing to Asia started in the early 1980s, India could be found at its forefront. Historically speaking, this was a radical change: For nearly 150 years, since the 1830s to be precise, the British mechanised manufacturing sites were so much more efficient than their Indian counterparts, that only the raw cotton was grown in the country, and then shipped directly to Europe².

This changed when, despite their high level of productivity, European and American manufacturing sites started to become too expensive in comparison to the outrageously low labour costs abroad, and the equally low labour and environmental standards, that were combined in addition with a lack of legal regulation. Suddenly, production was shifted back to where it had been up onto the early 19th century. The war of competitiveness through price, rather than through quality, took off.

Official figures state that globally the textile industry gives employment to some 30 Mio. people. At the same time, we know that in India alone an estimated 90% percent³ of the workforce is part of the informal or unorganised sector – meaning: they are not part of any official statistics - totalling at an estimated minimum of 30 Mio. home workers. Many of these are in fact making a living within the production cycle of the textile industry.

The textile industry scores officially a global second in importance, right behind agriculture. However, those numbers should raise our attention to an important factor in the global textile and accessories business that goes usually unnoticed: the industry is in reality massively larger than the official figures suggest. And: the statistical grey area is rather huge, be it with respect to the work force, the income generated, or the social and economical impact.

With cotton still being the most widely used fibre world wide – not only for apparel – the agricultural and textile industries have in reality some rather unexpected commonalities, notably in their impact on the environment, on human-rights, and through either onto the communities that have to live with the side effects: poisoning, abnormally high cancer rates, ground water scarcity, child labour, poverty and lack of education to just name a few.

India, as it turns out, has not only the advantage of being 'historically' familiar to the Anglo-Saxon corporate world, but by the 1980s, with NGOs marking their ground, it was well known that the country has a huge reservoir of needy, badly educated, willing workers on the one hand – still today about half of the Indian population lives under the poverty line⁴ -, and a well educated upper, and growing middle class, both of which were increasingly scrambling for the relatively few qualified jobs available.

When finally in the late 1980s the Fairtrade concept took off, India was – and remains – one of the main countries to profit from it. 'Typical' Indian products such as tea, coffee, nuts and spices were not only among those commodities traded in large quantities on a global level, but were among the first products for which a Fairtrade standards was devised, with cotton following much later.

Accidentally, the early years of the Fairtrade movement coincided with the widely publicised discoveries of factory sweat shop conditions and child labour at brands such as Nike. Ever since, India is – justifiable or not – often the first country that comes to mind with respect to the range of business practises in the textile industry: abuses of all kinds on the one hand, **and** in contrast myriads of initiatives and efforts for ground-breaking social, environmental and economic change on the other.

Many of the initiatives were started by small and medium fashion designers, and some brands have gone through difficult times. Lacking useful, concrete information they have ended up re-experiencing times and over again the mistakes, dos and don'ts their peers had experienced ahead of them. This document hence, aims at supporting small(er) designers when sourcing their production in India during the first stage of their efforts. It is the result of many a discussion circling around the rather unexpected difficulties encountered when building working relationships with Indian producers. It is intended, if you like, as a first step so as not having to 're-invent the wheel' from scratch.

² History of Outsourcing: <http://www.blog.kpoweb.com/41/history-of-outsourcing/>

³ Ezine article: <http://ezinearticles.com/?Textile-Industry-in-India&id=373841>

⁴ Wikipedia 'Poverty in India': http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty_in_India

2 India - Country Profile

2.2 Country Snap-Shot

Land area:	3,297,263 sq km (including Indian-administered Kashmir)
Land use	57% is agricultural land 16% is forest area 2.8% is permanent crops Irrigated land: 558,080 sq km (2003)
Population:	1,156,897,766 (July 2010 est.) country comparison to the world: 2
Age structure:	0-14 years: 30.5% (male 187,197,389/female 165,285,592) 15-64 years: 64.3% (male 384,131,994/female 359,795,835) 65 years and over: 5.2% (male 28,816,115/female 31,670,841) (2010 est.)
Literacy: (definition: age 15 and over can read and write)	total population: 61% male: 73.4% female: 47.8% (2001 census)
School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):	total: 10 years male: 11 years female: 9 years (2005)
Education expenditures:	3.2% of GDP (2005) country comparison to the world: 140
Main towns: (population is millions, 2001 census)	Mumbai (Bombay): 16.4 Kolkatta (Calcutta): 13.2 Delhi: 12.8 Chennai Madras): 6.4 Bangalore: 5.7 Hyderabad: 5.5
Climate:	Varied; humid subtropical in Ganges basin, semi-arid in the north-west, tropical humid in the north-east and most of the peninsula, tundra in the Himalayas, all areas receive rain from the south-west Monsoon in January-March
Languages:	Hindi is the national language and the primary tongue of 30% of the population. There are 14 other official languages: Bengali, Telegu, Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, Gujarati, Malayalam, Kannada, Oriya, Punjabi, Assamese, Kashmiri, Sindhi and Sanskrit. English is widespread in business circles and as a second language.
Religions in 2001 census	Hindu (80.5%); Muslim (13.4%), Christian (2.3%), Sikh (1.9%), Buddhist (0.8%), Jain (0.4%)
Measures:	Metric system. Numbers are often written in lakhs (100,000) and crores (10m)
Currency:	Rupee (Rs); Rs1 = 100 paisa. Average exchange rate in 2009: Rs4.8 = US\$1
Time:	5 hours 30 min ahead of GMT
Fiscal year:	April 1 st to March 31 st

Table 1: Factual profile data of India ^{5 6}

⁵ From CIA World Fact Book. Available on-line at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html>

⁶ Economist Intelligence Unite (EIU) – India report

2.3 General Economical Data

GDP (purchasing power parity):	\$3.57 trillion (2009 est.) \$3.324 trillion (2008 est.) \$3.095 trillion (2007 est.)	country comparison to the world: 5
GDP - real growth rate:	7.4% (2009 est.) 7.4% (2008 est.) 9% (2007 est.)	country comparison to the world: 10
GDP - per capita (PPP):	\$3,100 (2009 est.) \$2,900 (2008 est.) \$2,800 (2007 est.)	country comparison to the world: 163
GDP - composition by sector:	agriculture: 17% industry: 28.2% services: 54.9% (2009)	
Labour force:	467 million (2009 est.)	country comparison to the world: 2
Labour force - by occupation:	agriculture: 52% industry: 14% services: 34% (2009 est.)	
Official unemployment rate:	10.7% (2009 est.) 10.4% (2008 est.)	country comparison to the world: 120
Population below poverty line (official):	25% (2007 est.)	
Household income or consumption by percentage share:	lowest 10%: 3.6% highest 10%: 31.1% (2005)	
Distribution of family income (Gini index ⁷ – wealth distribution)	36.8 (2004)	country comparison to the world: 79

Table 2: Economic key data of India ⁸

2.4 Textile Products in India: Overview

<u>Textile Mill Production 2009</u>	<u>Public Mills Production</u>	<u>Co-operative mills:</u>	<u>Private mills:</u>
Yarn	60.69 mn kg	147.38 mn kg	3706.2 mn kg
Cotton Cloth	27.18 mn kg	136.13 ,m kg	2735.1 mn kg
Blended and non-cotton cloth:	33.51 mn kg	?	971.08 mn kg

Table 3: India: Textile mill production 2009 ⁹

The Textile products market in India is overall divided into three areas that share the country's textile export statistics:

Textile Product Mills	Transform yarn or fabric in Cut & Sew process into (non-apparel textiles. Not further considered here.	Exports (in USD mn) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarn: 2486.8 • Fabrics: 3369 • Ready made garments: 10936
Textile Mills:	Transform basic fibre (natural or synthetic) into a product such as yarn or fabric	

⁷ The Gini Index. Definition available on-line at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gini_Index

⁸ CIA World Fact Book. Online available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html>

⁹ ISI Emerging Markets - The Emerging Markets Information Service (EMIS)

Apparel Manufacturing	1) cut and sew (i.e. purchasing fabric and cutting and sewing to make a garment), and 2) knit fabric, then cut and sew the fabric into garment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles of Apparel and Accessories: 10956 <p>=> National Total: 20000 <=</p>
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Table 4: India: Textile Export Data 2009 ¹⁰

3 The Indian Textile Industry: Overview

3.2 Structure of the Indian textile production & manufacturing industry

The unique structure of the Indian textile industry – distinctively different from other (Asia) countries - is due to a legacy of tax, labour, and other regulatory policies . These have favoured small-scale, labour-intensive enterprises, while discriminating against larger scale, more capital-intensive operations. The structure is also due to the historical orientation towards meeting the needs of India’s predominately low-income domestic consumers, rather than the world market. ¹¹

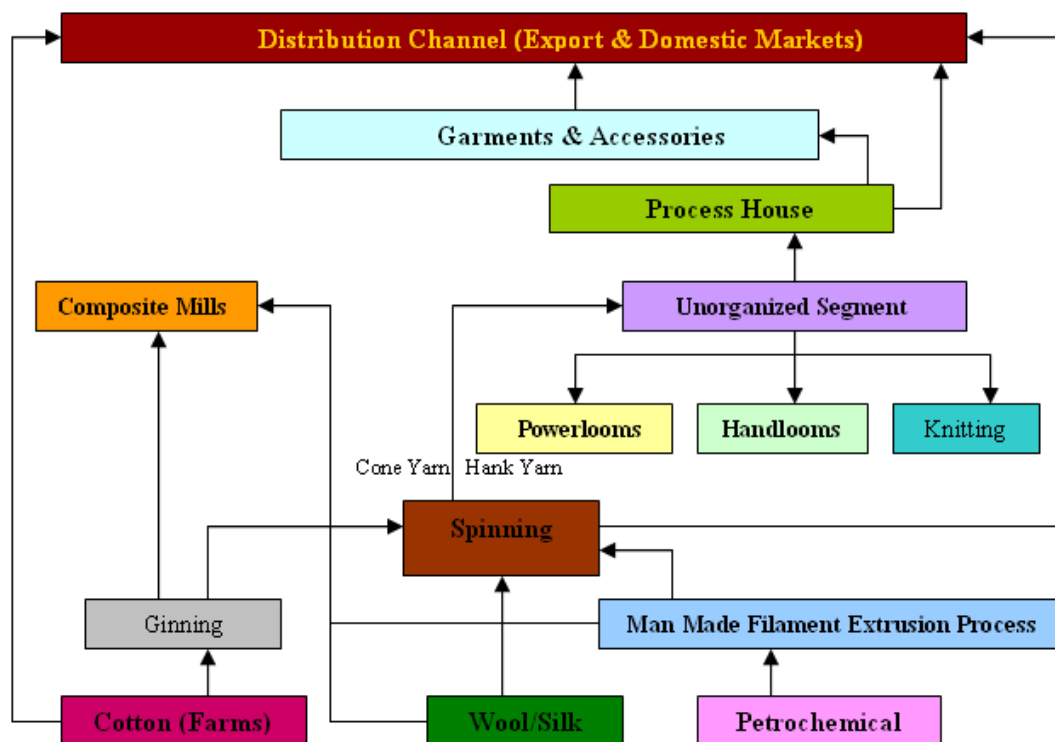


Illustration 1: Structure of the Indian textile industry (Source: India Craft Business Report¹²)

The Indian textile sector is characterised by its diversity and high fragmentation. There exist multiple layers of middle-men and business facilitators, and outsourcing is common practises. One of the greatest implications is that since most of the companies are small, there are very few clear examples of industry leadership and reference points that can be aspirational or inspirational for the rest of the industry.

While skilled Indian labour is inexpensive in absolute terms, due to lower productivity levels, much of this advantage is lost by small firms. Overall, the industry has proven to be low cost as well as extremely adaptive to demands related to quantity and lead time. While typical production runs are governed by fabric colour minimums, India presents the possibility of producing quantities as low as to a few hundred pieces. ¹³

¹⁰ ISI Emerging Markets - The Emerging Markets Information Service (EMIS)

¹¹ Dr. M. Dhanabhakym & A. Shanthi: “The Indian Textile Industry – An Overview”. Research paper. Available online at: <http://www.fibre2fashion.com/industry-article/2/104/indian-textile-industry-an-overview1.asp>

¹² India Crafts, “Textile Industry Structure”. Available online at: <http://www.india-crafts.com/business-reports/indian-textile-industry/textile-industry-structure.htm>

¹³ Devangshu Dutta, “The Indian Textile and Apparel Industry”. Available online at:

The textile industries tend to congregate in identifiable geographical areas. This is not a purely Indian phenomenon, but rather is, and was, the case on a global level. Historic examples in this context are: Manchester and Leicester in the UK; Alabama, Virginia and Mississippi in the US; Zurich and St. Gallen in Switzerland; Prato, Biella, Como and Carpi in Italy; Catalonia and Valencia in Spain; Lyon in France; Berlin and Brandenburg in Germany.

India is no exception to this rule, and indeed, clusters of distinct textile specialities are distributed across the country. The following graphic, pointing out manufacturing centres in accordance to their raw material specialisation, illustrates this:

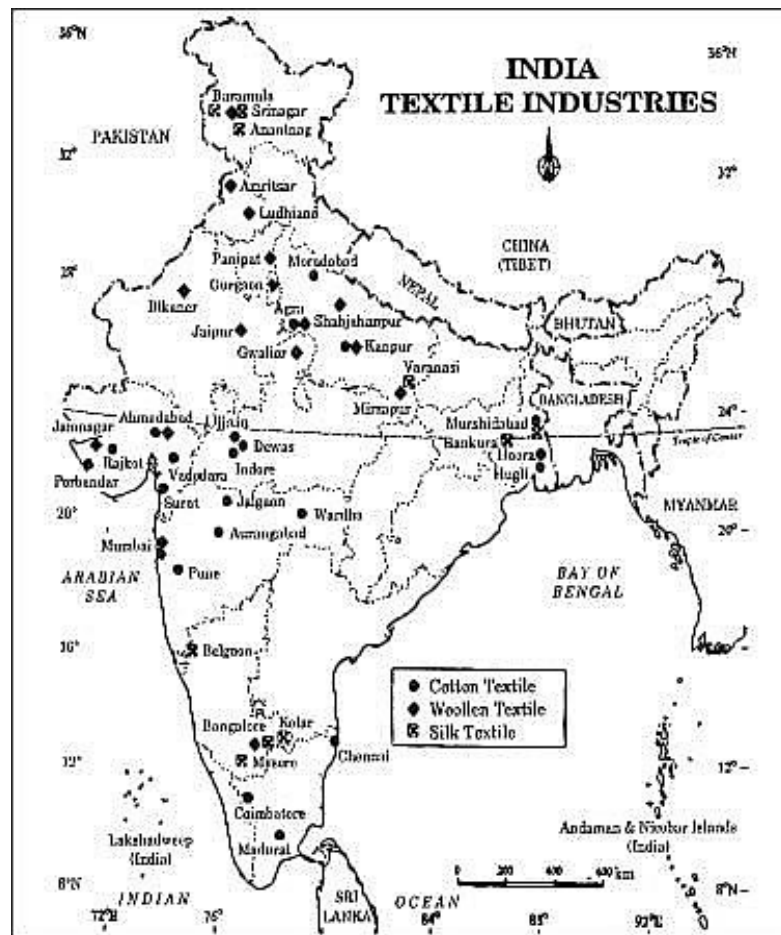


Illustration 2: Distribution of cottons, woollens and silks centres across the Indian subcontinent. (Source: Social Science 2009 Paper, Indian School Sohar, Delhi ¹⁴)

States such as Gujarat (woven), Tamil Nadu (knitwear), Karnataka (silk and woven), Maharashtra (woven and non-wovens) and Punjab (flat knits) have historically built up vast amounts of expertise in textile production, and maintain their dominance over other regions until the present.

4 Sourcing Ethically

Where fashion designers and retailers are commonly content with 'just' having their garments and accessories produced to the quality standards and deadlines they require, once social and environmental awareness enters the boat, the rules of the game change fundamentally. The need to know how, where and under what precise conditions a collection is being produced – and importantly also the respective fabrics and fibres – is an

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/7100438/Ofi-Indian-Textile-Apparel-Industry>

¹⁴ Social Science Exam Paper, Indian School Sohar, Delhi: <http://issexams.blogspot.com/2010/03/social-sciences-2009.html>

absolute precondition for the credibility and reputation of an ethical brand. This need for accountability and transparency is challenged by a whole rat tale of factors, some of which are described hereafter.

The fragmentation that is a fundamental characteristic of the Indian textile industry – notably with its heavy reliance on the cottage industry as 'flexible' labour force - makes sourcing a rather difficult job. The majority of reasonably sized manufactures will invariably collaborate with a whole network of small-scale cooperatives, cottage workers (predominantly women) as well other factories smaller than themselves. Furthermore, it is estimated that a whopping 90% percent¹⁵ of the Indian workforce is part of the informal or un-organised sector (totalling at an estimated 30 Mio. people) – and the textile industry is certainly not an exception to this rule. The somewhat simplistic question 'Is my collection *really* physically produced in the manufacturing site that I have been to, evaluated and approved?' is often much harder to answer reliably once you're just e-mailing your orders and patterns trough from Europe or the US.

The situation is made worse by the fact that Indian labour laws are still found to be relatively unfavourable to workers and small suppliers, with companies following a 'hire and fire' policy – the abundant availability of labour makes it for instance possible to have 300 core staff working one week, and the tenfold number the week after should a high quantity order with tight deadline come in. Companies generally do not offer long term contracts, wages are paid on a weekly basis and workers are never certain of their employment. Unionisation is a rather unknown phenomenon: Larger companies habitually brake their business down into small units in order to avoid clusters, and therefore any potential trouble with labourers joining forces and standing in for their rights¹⁶.

Yet another aspect is the scatteredness of small scale suppliers, which brings with it the problem of productivity. It is estimated that the current productivity of Indian factories is at half or even as low as only one-third of levels that might otherwise be achievable. And last, but not least, small scale companies often do not have the resources to invest in appropriate technology, retraining, even health and safety, or the improvements of manufacturing processes. This directly impacts working conditions, workers' health, productivity and – consequently - product quality.

4.2 Producer Landscape

The Indian textile industry can be organised into a grid structure. On the one hand there are: extremely large suppliers; medium sized companies often still in the hands of the founder or founder family; small-sized cooperatives and family enterprises; and finally, micro-enterprises that are in vast majority of all cases part of the unstructured sector. On the other side we find: those companies that cater towards exports and overseas markets, and those that are specialised on the local market, with the latter often meaning the large masses of very-low income individuals.

The **very large suppliers**, as those mentioned in chapter 4.3 below, cater generally towards export and overseas markets exclusively, and they have got strong links with world brands such as Addidas, Nike, Walmart, C&A etc. Their fate is closely linked with those of said global brands, and as a consequence, their business strategy – from staffing, to investments and product line up – is mostly driven by the demands of these brands, which again react chiefly only to pressure and demand from their own (high street) customers.

Impact on ethical sourcing: Suppliers in this league are really only interesting to large chain retailers and mega-brands. As far as 'ethical' sourcing is concerned, they generally are specialised in the area of organic cotton, and hence are little innovative. They need large production runs to produce most efficiently. As a consequence, for the vast majority of ethical buyers this type of supplier is not of interest.

The **medium sized** tier of manufacturers in contrast, are their larger peers' equivalent for the local Indian market. Generally, the location of a manufacturing site has a higher importance than is the case for the factories catering mostly to export. This is due to the fact that, as a consequence of targeting the very low income population, transport costs – for raw material as well as finished products – have a key influence on the product price. In addition, a strategic good location also guarantees access a to cheap, overly flexible, willing labour force.

¹⁵ Ezine articles: <http://ezinearticles.com/?Textile-Industry-in-India&id=373841>

¹⁶ Ezine Articles: <http://ezinearticles.com/?Textile-Industry-in-India&id=373841>

Impact on ethical sourcing: For a medium sized brand with sufficient production volume, and the willingness to invest and strike up long-term collaborations, producers in this tier may be interesting. However, it has to be kept in mind that some of their business approaches are substantially different in the present, than what would be expected of them as an ethical supplier. Their entire approach to hiring, labour standards, business planning, production, or health and safety may potentially require an overhaul to fit the bill as an ethical supplier. This said, if a producers of this size is needed, and the commitment is mid to long-run, it may well be worth the investment.

Small sized cooperatives and family enterprises feel the squeeze at the lower end of the food chain of textile producers. The realities they meet in the market are often challenging: On the one hand they are used as flexible (as in: on call, discardable) production units for manufacturers larger than themselves, and hence depend on the goodwill of those they collaborate with in order to survive and guarantee stability to their business. On the other hand, they also often cater to more local communities, both as employers as well as supplier. This 'sandwich' situation leads however, to interesting results: The size of these manufacturers makes it relatively easy to run small and medium production runs, of even only a few hundred pieces, or possibly less. Additionally, they are more flexible to changing (i.e. upgrade, improve) their facilities and processes drastically in a short time if a contractor requires so, and if he offers the contract terms that support doing it. The need for a diversified client base has driven a growing number of factories to strike up links with smaller labels and brands overseas, and to keep abreast of what is happening in the fashion SME sector in typical consumer markets such as Europe, the US and Japan. Many innovations take, hence, first root in this section of the market.

Impact on ethical sourcing: Manufacturers in this market segment are the candidates par excellence to serve as suppliers to ethical brands with relevant, but not too large production numbers. To strike up close collaborations is relatively straight forward – and often needed in order to guarantee success. The buyer is in the position to heavily influence the entire factory, and mould all aspects of the business. This comes, of course, at the price of having to invest substantially into education, supervision, quality control, productivity-related issues and the building of a trust-based relationship.

At the very bottom end of the food chain, finally, are the myriads of **micro-enterprises**. These could for instance be tiny workshops huddled away in some back street alley, or individuals producing at home (cottage industry; *there are an estimated 30 Mio. home workers in India*). These micro-enterprises are entirely exposed to the forces of the market, and at the mercy of middlemen and medium-sized manufacturers that use them as flexible workforce for low-number production runs, and for labour intensive work processes (such as embroidery). They naturally also cater towards their immediate community of neighbours, and as 'bespoke' producers for better off residents. Their primary challenge is survival on a very basic level: being paid living wages for the work they do – which often requires a constant battle with the middlemen that are in charge of hiring them, and who skim off substantial percentages of the labour's actual market value.

Impact on ethical sourcing: For a small ethical brand, that understands itself also as a social business, collaborations with cottage labour communities and co-operatives are possibly the way of the largest direct positive impact. The key issue though is to first have a suitable product (i.e. fabrics, shawls etc. but **not** a more elaborate product such as finished garments) and to find sufficiently skilled workers to start producing as soon as possible in order to generate income from actual sales. Education, training, reliability of the supply, quality standards, trust building with the community of suppliers are all issues that will require substantial investments of time and efforts as production expands.

In relation to small and micro-enterprises, another role cannot go unmentioned: the **middleman**. Originally, the status of the middleman was that of a distributor, or maybe more accurately: a backward and forward link between buyers and producers. The middleman would acquire goods from farmers in a specific geographical area, and capitalise on the benefit that he drew from the economy of scale by transporting it to the central

market places, in a time when farmers would not have been able to access those markets. In a rural setting he was many things at once: micro-credit giver, promoter, additional manpower if needed, or market researcher. In the present however, middlemen are go-betweeners who connect producers – often being small-holders and cottage workers – with buyers – for a price on both sides. In principle, even large manufacturing units act as 'middleman' linking with smaller units, that in turn link again with yet smaller units etc. The importance of middlemen for marginalised communities in order to access paid work is substantial – a fact that is illustrated by the abundant, abusive, but anything but uncommon realities: delayed payments, skimming off up to 90% of a the market value of a product, lending out money for e.g. pesticide at rates that even a successful harvest won't cover. There are frequent cases where middlemen ask for payment even when they have not been involved in a specific transaction, but they know that as a general rule their victim needs their business in the future, and hence pressure them into payment.

Impact on ethical sourcing: For a brand or designer that wants to make sure that what is sourced and produced is made under the fairest possible conditions, trying to cut out the middleman will be pivotal. Not giving payment to middlemen for introductions is the first step. The more difficult issue will be though to make sure that no one is cashing behind your back at all from whomever you decide to work with. If you plan to spend much of your time overseas, and not in India, the best way to avoid workers being blackmailed into paying, is to try and find a local NGO, co-operative etc. that may be willing to give you a hand while hoping to expand their reach on the long-run. Alternatively, a *trusted* local citizen to step in for you and supervise the situation in your absence may potentially be another option.

4.3 Organic Cotton – India's role in the global market

The organic cotton market, i.e. the global sales of organic cotton apparel and home textile products, reached in 2009 an estimate \$4.3 billion, an 35% increase from the \$3.2 billion market recorded in 2008¹⁷. It is projected to grow to \$5.1 billion in 2010 and \$6 billion in 2011. Organic cotton now represents 1.1% percent of global cotton production (2010)¹⁸. In 2010, organic cotton was grown in 23 countries worldwide, with India at 195'757 metric tons being the biggest producer of organic cotton fibre by volume with the lion's share of 81% (2009: 68%), Syria (8.27%) and Turkey (4.8%) are a distant second and third, followed thereafter by China, United States, Tanzania, Uganda, Peru, Egypt and Burkina Faso (in order of rank). Worldwide, an approximately 275'000 farmers grow organic cotton¹⁹.

Most of India's organic cotton is produced in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. The Cotton Association of India²⁰ reports that out of a total 3.5Mio. bales of raw cotton (each weighting 500 lbs = 226.8kg app.) exported from India in 2008-09, more than 100'000 were organic cotton²¹. This is the equivalent of about one fifth of the total amount of organic cotton produced in the country, with the remaining four fifth used by national (often large scale) manufacturers. Worldwide, the top 10 organisations buying organic cotton on a large scale – and as a consequence the principle market drivers – are the following:

1. C&A: 18 million pieces in 2009, 23 million pieces in 2010 (planned), 20% year-on-year increase. 90% of its organic cotton comes from India.	5. Anvil Knitwear
2. Nike Inc. (by 2010 5% organic cotton in every single cotton-containing product) ²²	6. Coop Switzerland
3. Walmart / Sam's Club	7. Greensource
	8. Levi Strauss
	9. Target
	10. Addidas

¹⁷ Indian Express: Big brands stitch up success with organic cotton, 20 Juni 2010

¹⁸ Textile Exchange 2010 Market Report, Executive Summary:

http://organicexchange.org/oecms/images/stories/publications/Farm_amp_Fibre_Report_2010_Final_EXEC_SUMMARY_100111_-_Reduced.pdf

¹⁹ Organic Trade Association (OTA): http://www.ota.com/organic/mt/organic_cotton.html

²⁰ Cotton Association of India: <http://www.caionline.in/>

²¹ Country Profiles – India a cotton giant, Textile World Asia:

http://www.textileworldasia.com/Articles/2010/September/July_August_September_Issue/Country_Profile_India.html

²² Inteletex 'Organic Cotton': <http://www.inteletex.com/FeatureDetail.asp?NewsId=3607>

4. H&M	11. Nordstrom
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Table 5: *The world's 10 largest organic cotton buyers, in descending order (Source: Organic Exchange (2010) ²³)*

At the same time as the above mentioned buyers purchase their vast majority of organic cotton from India, it is in reality only a selected group of textile mills that is in the position to cater to them. Some of the major producers in this context are ²⁴:

- Arvind Mills²⁵: organic denim and jeans made of organic cotton. In order to have access to a steady supply of organic cotton, they have launched their CSR programs supporting rural communities and small-hold organic cotton farms in particular.
- Abishek Industries' Trident Group²⁶: cotton towels and home textiles. They also offer products made from Milk Yarn, Sea Weed, Soy fibre, and Cotton Bamboo, dyed with herbs. Certifications: Oekotex, IMO and ISO 9001.
- Alok Industries²⁷: yarn, home textiles and apparel. Certifications: Oeko Tex Standard 100, GOTS, OE 100, Swan, EU Flower, FLO.
- Mandhana Industries²⁸: apparel. Certifications: Oeko Tex 100, ISO 9001, FLO, SA8000, OE 100

4.3.1 TraceNet – A national system to track organic products for export

TraceNet²⁹ is an internet based electronic service offered to the stakeholders for facilitating process certification for export of organic products from India. TraceNet collects, stores and reports forward and backward traces and quality assurance data entered by the operators / producer groups and certification bodies within the organic supply chain in India. It is the world's first software on organic products that can trace details of each consignment up to the farm level.

TraceNet is the fourth such tracking system (after GrapeNet, AnarNet and Groundnut Products which are aimed at tracking grapes, pomegranates and nuts respectively), that the Indian Agricultural & Processed Food Export Development Authority (Apeda) launched.

In order to be TraceNet accredited, suppliers need to conform either with the India's own National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)³⁰ or the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s National Organic Program (NOP)³¹.

The system as just been rolled out, and so far, the focus on exports has been on organic food items, such as, tea and spices. However, there is a strong effort of expanding fundamentally into organic non-food, specifically cotton. TraceNet accreditation is as of May 2010 recognised by the European Union, Switzerland and the United States³², i.e. the principle importer nations of organic products, notably also of organic cotton.

4.3.2 Cotton-Alternatives: Indian export fibres

While cotton is India's primary natural export fibre, the country historically also produces a large range of other fibres, some of which are increasingly used as alternative options to cotton. Not every fibre type is

²³ Organic Exchange 2009 Market Report, Executive Summary: http://organicexchange.org/oecms/images/stories/publications/2009_OE_Market_Report_Executive_Summary_for_web.pdf

²⁴ For more large scale suppliers and detail about them, please refer to the list published online by Cotton Incorporated: <http://www.cottoninc.com/organic-cotton-suppliers/>

²⁵ Arvind Mills Ltd.: <http://www.arvindmills.com/>

²⁶ Details about Abishek Industries from Home Textile Live: <http://www.hometextilelive.com/abhishek-industries/>

²⁷ Alok Industries Ltd.: <http://www.alokind.com/textiles.html>

²⁸ Mandhana Industries Ltd.: <http://www.mandhana.com/>

²⁹ TraceNet, Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India: <http://apeda.com/apedawebsite/TracenetOrganic/TraceNet.htm>

³⁰ Tracing website, Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India: <http://apeda.com/apedawebsite/organic/index.htm>

³¹ US National Organic Program, Agricultural Marketing Service: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop>

³² TraceNet press release by LogiSoft: <http://www.lsipl.com/press-releases/tracenet-traceability-software-organic-products.html>

however produced in quantities that make it a viable option for apparel production. The following table lists the most commonly available natural cotton-alternative fibres:

TOTALS (sustainably produced and others ³³)	India 2008	India 2009	Global Total ³⁴
Wool (8 th , after Australia, China, New Zealand, Argentina, Turkey, Iran, and UK)	44018 kg th	41000 kg th	1.2 Mio t
Raw Silk (2 nd after China)	18320 ton	18370 kg th	0.15 Mio t
Jute (2 nd after Bangladesh)	10.221 Bale mn	9.634 Bale mn	2.9 Mio t
Mesta	0.99 Bale mn	0.731 Bale mn	(Jute-like fibres: 0.4 Mio t)
Cotton in Comparison (Total): (Organic: 1 st before Syria; Non-organic: 2 nd after USA)	25.884 Bale mn	22.276 Bale mn	25 Mio t
Other fibres: Ramie, Hemp, Kenaf, Flax,			Hemp: 0.09 Mio ton Flax: 1 Mio t Ramie: 0.28 Mio t

Table 6: Cotton-alternative fibres produced in India, and global comparison ³⁵

5 Practical sourcing tips from your predecessors

As a small designer or label, there is a high chance that you will be required to collaborate with small suppliers, workshops or individuals that are not certified by any of the existing standards, and likely will be too small to strive for certification any time soon. It will be *your own* responsibility to find ways of how collaboration can be achieved successfully, while at the same time making clear what your expectations and standards on all levels – working conditions, labour pay, labour rights, health and safety, product quality – are.

People that have previously launched their own brands using suppliers in India suggest that the most successful approach is to choose a supplier/manufacturer that corresponds to your own size, and with whom you share the same, or at least a similar, basic outlook onto the future of their company, and who will be able and ready to grow with you as your own reach expands.

Be prepared to invest time for creating mutual trust and building working knowledge. Just as much as it is important for you to have orders completed on time in accordance to your standards, it is important for your supplier to know that they will receive payment in full and on time and that you, too, are a reliable partner to work with. Accept the fact that results of any kind may take *two or three times* as long as what you expected originally. Be patient, determined and persevere. The knowledge you build in this crucial initial stage is essential, and will help you to be quicker and encountering less hurdles with future production runs.

5.2 What everyone talks about, but few do: Homework

The points mentioned in this section are of importance in all your sourcing activities – not only in the case of India. You will, without a shade of doubt, be quizzed about them times and over again, and will repeatedly be required to discuss these contents, your commitments, expectations and standards. Each of these points adds one facet to who are as a brand, and how you are being perceived, not the least also by your suppliers.

³³ ISI Emerging Markets - The Emerging Markets Information Service (EMIS)

³⁴ FAOSTAT Database on Agriculture 2009: <http://faostat.fao.org>

³⁵ ISI Emerging Markets - The Emerging Markets Information Service (EMIS)

⇒ ***Market needs – are there signs that there is a need/want for what you plan to offer?***

If you plan to source from India, chances are you will be sourcing from small producers. The Indian textile industry is volatile, and the situation of precisely these producers makes them highly vulnerable to the impact you have as their buyer. What they need is as much stability and reliability as you can afford to offer, and not one-off experiments. A clear market need implies that there is a market you can sell into, and as a consequence the stability of your own business and orders, and therefore also stability for your suppliers.

It is absolutely key that you do a little bit of market research – formal or informal – to find out if what you plan to sell will find the customers you imagine. Ways how to do that could be by selling individual pieces on sites such as E-Bay's fashion site, taking out a stall at a regular local market, or do informal inquiries among people on the street and potential retailers in order to receive feedback.

⇒ ***Clear vision – of what your product is.***

To produce and later sell your designs, you have to learn and see them as what they are: products. You will have to learn to convert your designs into a product that can, and will, be manufactured in a textile assembly line. Your patterns, cuts, colours, fabrics etc. all will have to accommodate this reality, and the corresponding expectations of your suppliers.

⇒ ***Clear vision – of what 'ethical' means for you.***

Get comfortable with being transparent: 'Ethical', 'eco', 'sustainable' can mean different things to different people. What is your definition? Are you planning on going the whole nine yards and to look at every single detail of your business – from the where you have your business cards made to how you package your garments? Or do you intend to take one hurdle at a time starting with using certified primary materials?

Be clear what you are talking about. Be specific in your approach and the reasons of how and why you do it the way you do it. Make it clear, make it transparent and walk the talk. People of all trades, in India and in your home market, will ask you about it. Know what you want to tell them.

⇒ ***Know the social and economical context you will be dealing with, and make sure to understand it.***

India is not Europe or the US, and a lot of things work differently. Assuming that you can bring your Westerns expectations 1:1 to India will invariable lead to a disaster. 'When in Rome do as the Romans do' the saying goes, and you will need to keep this in your mind at every moment. Whether you collaborate with certified commercial mainstream suppliers or social enterprises: you will need to understand, amongst others, how they produce, what their training level is, where they source materials from, how they hire their staff, what they pay them. You will need to do research on and in the local community in order to understand the bigger picture.

Specifically, if you decide to collaborate with social enterprises and NGOs as your suppliers, understanding what their mission is, and how they work to achieve it, is key: You will need to embed their values into how you collaborate with them.

⇒ ***Talk to people who have done it before.***

India is not that much of a novel 'off the beaten track' sourcing country. Numerous brands across Europe, from small to large, have their collections and products made in India. It is worth talking to them informally to create a hands-on image of what is in stock for you.

What were, and are, their experiences? What is their advice for someone manufacturing for the first time in India? Could they even recommend you a supplier, or an area to look for one?

Even a single informal conversation over a cup of tea will give a much clearer picture and help you in taking decisions.

⇒ ***Know your own expectations and limitations – financially, time-wise and in any other aspect!***

Remember: you don't have to do it all by yourself. If you do not want to re-invent the sourcing wheel at least partially, or don't feel equipped for the rather steep climb that initiating collaboration with suppliers means, consider alternatives.

Producing closer to home, the UK or else where in Europe, is one option.

Hire a well-reputed agent is another approach of how to source from India while profiting from an expert's vast experience and years in the business. Agents, no doubt, cost money. They may save you though the equivalent of a couple of years first hands experiences and nerves, and as a consequence also the corresponding amount of money at the bottom line. They are usually worth the investment.

5.3 Increase your chances to fail: The Don'ts

▷ *Work with large suppliers when you're a small or even micro enterprise*

Competition among manufacturers in India to fill their books with orders is fierce. On occasions, you may find that a relatively large manufacturer is happy to produce your small quantity order. Think twice before going going down that road:

Small orders are unlikely to be produced at the main factory – chances are high that it is outsourced to a subcontracted smaller entity. You will have much less control and influence on the manufacturing process of your own order. It will be more difficult for you, even when physically on site, to make sure that your order is made to the standards you require– quality-wise as well as ethically -, and that it is made to deadline.

▷ *Expect to work only with already certified organisations.*

Be it Fairtrade, GOTS, WFTO, SA8000 or any other audited certification: Certification processes are rather expensive. Money that an organisation can only afford if they are either large enough, and generating sufficient bottom-line benefit, to pay for it. Or else, if they have a sponsor – you.

Chances hence are that you will not find already certified organisations with small enough minimum order quantities willing to work with you, but that you will be required to collaborate with smaller, non-certified organisation.

▷ *Follow inadvertently the 'fast fashion' trail – with short lead times and cheap prices.*

This segment of the market is owned in exclusivity by the big retailers. They have a system set up whereby they can deal with their own short lead times, target prices and delivery deadlines. They can, because they have millions of Dollars to back them up, and a network of high street outlets that generate the turnover that makes it all possible. But it is precisely their size, and the speed they require for their operations, that makes them vulnerable to all types of unethical business practices.

This is not the market you want to compete with. Don't fall into the trap and play the 'fast fashion game' with your suppliers, certainly not if you want to stick to your ethical credentials. Too short deadlines create pressure – and trying to budge to the pressure, the suppliers will need to find solutions to deliver on time. Outsourcing and low wages are just the beginning of the vicious circle.

▷ *Committing to deadlines because you're pushed to.*

Do trial runs of orders before committing to deadlines with buyers as it can be very stressful meeting deadlines once set. Nothing happens quickly in India. Tight deadlines for large orders can lead to unethical practices as manufacturers cannot cope and may end up outsourcing the work.

▷ *Expect to find suppliers 'off the catalogue' quickly: with no network, no contacts - and no time.*

Just as you need suppliers that deliver to your standards – quality, deadlines, workers' rights, environmental impact – your future suppliers need to be able to trust you.

To find manufacturers that fit your bill, and that are willing and able to do business with you may take time. Many of the good leads will come out of your network – from people that somehow got to know what you're looking for. Time is a key factor for building a network that reliably knows your preferences and credentials.

If you're pressed for time, but don't have built a network yet that generates the introductions and leads you need to find suitable manufacturers, either produce initially closer to your home market, or else consider investing into the services of an agent. The latter will cost you money – calculate some 20% of the order value – but will save you time, and hence money, in all other respects.

↳ ***Expect everything to work smoothly the first time round.***

This is a new venture. Expect there to be challenges (cf. Chapter 5.6, pp. 19). Give yourself and your manufacturer time to adjust to each other, and find out how to work best and most efficiently. It would take time if you were to do it in your home country – don't expect it to be less complicated once you go abroad.

↳ ***Assume everyone speaks (native) English***

English, while an official language of India, is a minority language. Expect to find that any other of the remaining 21 official languages is what you will be dealing with primarily. You will be in need of an English savvy contact person at the manufacturer at all times, not the least also in order as a translator and interpreter for when you're on site. This will apply to all aspects of the collaboration with your manufacturer: Oral and written instructions, design patterns and related instructions, deadlines, agreements, etc.

In fact, language-wise it will not make much of a difference whether your manufacturing partners is located in India, Cambodia, Malawi or Peru.

↳ ***Plan to do everything via remote communication.***

Communication at a distance – whether it's between London and Barcelona, Paris and Berlin, or Europe and India – is prone to misunderstandings and imprecisions. To communicate with precision over a distance requires that considerable effort be invested to avoid any inclarities and misunderstandings.

To communicate at a distance is only second best – try to avoid it wherever and whenever you can, but rather spend as much time face to face as possible, specifically if something important is being worked on, e.g. a new collection: Do the sampling on site, sign off each individual step of the manufacturing process, as well as the final product. Make sure each step you signed off on can be reproduced faithfully times and times again. If you absolutely have to communicate via e-mail, phone or video-conferencing: Make it a habit to over-specify anything and everything. Be prepared to invest more time overall in doing so – time, that you can spend, of course, running your business in the home market in parallel.

5.4 This works: The Dos

↳ ***Know exactly what you stand for.***

A clear idea about your vision and how you want to operate is a good first step. Write it down so you can refer to it when the waters get rough and commercial needs seem to take precedence over anything else.

↳ ***Know exactly what your working principles are.***

When working with your suppliers – in India as much as in your home market - , different aspects of your principles will be challenged times and over again. In order to be coherent and consistent, you need to know exactly what they are, how you want to react to breaches. Take some time and write down how you would like yourself dealing with critical situations.

↳ ***Choose the labels/certifications you work with carefully.***

Product labels exists – presumably – to make things easier for buyers on all levels (not only consumers) and help navigate the multitude of different types of 'ethical' productions and reduce the stress to audit and

evaluate it all personally. For instance, at the time of writing: no less than 30 environmental labels^{36 37} and 6 social/labour labels^{38,39} exist! What labels and certifications to use – for your raw materials as well as for your brand – is hence a question that will need to be looked into. A good starting point for your investigation is the 'EcoTextile Labeling Guide'⁴⁰.

Apart from the differences of what a specific label certifies for, there are several aspects you will need to primarily consider: their recognition with consumers, their recognition within the industry, and lastly, how well one specific label – and its certification and audit procedures – helps you achieve your 'ethical' goals.

As a first approach, analyse which labels your direct competition (mainstream and 'ethical') use. This will give you an idea of what is widely recognised. Equipped with that knowledge, have a detailed look at what is generally available and how choosing one label or another will impact your operations – financially but also process-wise.

⇒ ***Everyone you know and meet is part of your network.***

A 'network' is not only made up of purely business-related acquaintances. Customers, family, friends, casual encounters – to one degree or other they all belong to your network. The more people know what you, how you do it – specifically – what you're looking for (e.g. suppliers), the higher the chances that someone will be able to help you taking the next step.

⇒ ***Choose carefully which events to attend on a regular basis.***

Fashion shows and trades fairs not only serve to show case your own designs, but – importantly – will give you the opportunity to meet a broad range of people; peers, potential suppliers as well as competitors. Some of the events cater towards ethical brands exclusively, others have dedicated sections yet others purposely absorb ethical brands within the mainstream. A listing of ethical fashion shows and trade fairs is available at ⁴¹.

⇒ ***Your designs showcase your brand – consumers may not care for your ethical credentials.***

The reality is that the average consumer – the majority of people that you want to buy your designs – does not care whether or not what they buy has been produced ethically or not. Worse: ethically made fashion still suffers from the historic legacy which associates it with ethnic, hippie-style clothing or well meant but largely unattractive 'potato-bag' designs. As a consequence, you will need to learn to walk the thin red line of how, when and to what extent refer publicly to your ethical credentials.

In the end, it is 'transparency without bragging' that works best – customers are free to know about how you do business, but they are equally free to ignore your business practises and follow their shopping habit.

⇒ ***What is your story?***

Brands that claim to be ethical *will* be quizzed about their credentials. Transparency is of course one way how to go about facing critique. Often underestimated however, is the power of a compelling story – specifically when you work with overseas suppliers – with India in your case.

Why did you want to source from India? What is it that your looking for in a supplier – beyond mere production capacity? What do you want to achieve with creating yet another brand of clothing to compete in

³⁶ Global Action Through Fashion: <http://www.globalactionthroughfashion.org/environmental-labels.html>

³⁷ ISO 14000: http://www.iso.org/iso/iso_14000_essentials

³⁸ Global Action Through Fashion: <http://www.globalactionthroughfashion.org/labels--certifications.html>

³⁹ SA8000: <http://www.sa-intl.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.ViewPage&PageID=937>

⁴⁰ EcoTextile Labelling Guide: http://www.ecotextile.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10048%3Aeco-textile-labelling-guide-2010&catid=111%3Alabels-legislation-premium&Itemid=2

⁴¹ Listing of ethical fashion shows and trade fairs: <http://shirahime.ch/2010/11/global-vs-local-iiii-%E2%80%93-ethical-fashion-internationally-shows-trade-fairs-brand-and-supplier-directories/>

the market? Where are you different, better, more original? And specifically, how does that apply to how you plan to find and work with your suppliers?

↳ *Collaboration saves time, nerves and money.*

Doing it all on your own means reinventing the wheel over and over again. After all, you are not the first uprising label that intends to source from India, but rather you follow a historic pathway. Collaboration will help you to bridge some of your knowledge and experience gaps, and hence let your venture progress quicker and more smoothly.

Collaboration can mean different things to different people, and there are various ways how you could go about it.

- Find peers – other designers, labels – in the same situation, and join efforts to find suppliers by planning conjoint production runs. This does not necessarily have to be someone from your home market, but could be a brand from e.g. a different EU country.
- Get introduced to an uprising Indian designer who is interested in acquiring experiences in the European/US market.
- Find a mentor among those that have set up already established brands.
A mentor is not a consultant, but rather a critical voice, someone to bounce ideas off and brainstorm with, and who ideally has many more years of experience than you – although not necessarily in the same industry.
- Find a trusted agent that helps source your production according to your criteria and that will support you and prevent fatal errors from occurring. This costs money initially, but at the same time will save you a lot of time and troubles.

↳ *Keep learning and (try to) enjoy the ride.*

The fascinating aspect of having your collections made in India is the fact that there is a lot of inspiration around, and while things may not always work out the way you imagined, there are always alternatives and new ideas to work with.

Looking beyond what you have been taught in the past, and how 'it has always been done'. No doubt, this will be stressful in many ways – not the least time-wise and financially. Yet: See what there is, what is available and how you can use it, what you can make with it. There are ideas around you may never have thought of in first place.

Listen carefully to your Indian partners - they have experiences that you still need to acquire - and evaluate what you learn and hear from them carefully before taking a decision.

5.5 Training: The essence of collaboration and fostering change

Workers in factories, specifically in small and very small units, are not normally familiar with Western expectations, manufacturing ('making') processes or what could be considered clothing related 'common knowledge'. Their own textile tradition is different from that in Europe and the US, and they do not have first hand experiences of what is expected in those markets by consumers with respect to product quality, precision levels, finishing techniques etc.

This said, the workers are usually highly trained and skilled, and have often found to be proud of their work and aim at delivering good work. What is often primarily lacking is (formal) training in the areas and aspects they fall short of. It is in this context that working with certified fair trade suppliers is relatively straight forward: Fair trade certified manufacturers offer their buyers to conduct trainings for the workers as part of the package. This is therefore a formal opportunity to work with them, as an example, on pattern cutting or finishing techniques.

But even if manufacturers are too small to offer their workers formal training opportunities, it is no doubt worth investing the time to either organise formal trainings yourself, or to grab every opportunity and train workers informally 'on the job'.

In either case, though, it is of eminent importance to evaluate what (and how) you want to train your suppliers, and to do that you must be aware of what failures happen consistently and repeatedly, and are not one-off. Hereafter 3 topics – in addition to English language classes - that in all cases we know of, are part of the formal or informal training agenda.

▷ **Training topic: 'Traditional CSR' - Occupation health, labour conditions and environmental impact.**

In Europe and the US, legal regulations take care of a vast amount of issues related to occupational health, labour conditions and rights, and environmental aspects such as waste, recycling, sewage etc. It can be safely said that the extent to which the set out laws and regulations require us to take care of ourselves and our co-citizens, is rather unique on a global scale. But it was knowledge and education, sometimes defended against the position of a majority, rather than 'common sense' or 'social commitment' that has lead the way along the path of stepwise improved conditions in individual work places to legal requirements.

When working with your suppliers on 'traditional CSR' issues you will find that critical factors will be ignorance occasionally paired with cultural bias and community-related problems – and not such much wilful wrong doing. Training in this area needs to take an explicitly collaborative approach as it is a key arena where 'ethics' in apparel production starts to take hold.

For instance, work related accidents when handling sewing machines are relatively easily remedied through simple protective measures, and training factories and workers is relatively straight forward. Proper handling of hazardous substances – dye stuffs or bleach – is more demanding, and it is also harder to implement the appropriate standards. Finding children at the factory may be the result of (a combination of) several factors: low wages for adults which require all family members to contribute; young teenagers being considered adults in their society and hence apt to work; lack of after-school and child care while parents are away at work, hence children come to a factory – and 'give the adults a hand' - so that they can be supervised by either or both of their parents, etc.

Topics that need to be address, and possibly resolved, are:

- Work agreements, incl. wages paid, working hours, redundancy and sick-days regulations
- Physical set up of the work place , incl. protection from injuries when operating machines, lighting, hygiene, emergency exits, fire prevention equipment and escapes
- Children in the work place (and how else they could be taken care of)
- Environmental pollution through rubbish, sewage, chemicals
- Rights to form interest groups (unionisation)
- Treatment of workers (prevention of harassment)
- Gender equality
- Discrimination due to age, cast, gender etc.

▷ **Training topic: Garment making – Differing traditions between India and Europe/US.**

Garments, and how they are being worn and made depend to a large extent on the cultural context they are found in. A Japanese Kimono or Yukata, an Indian Saree and a European dress serve in principle the same general purpose. However, the way they are being worn properly and how they are being made from a garment construction point of view, is in each case also part of the larger cultural context – and as such knowing how to make a Japanese Kimono proficiently does not mean that this will serve to make a Indian Saree with an equal degree of proficiency.

When collaborating with small Indian manufacturers, the workers will likely have an unsophisticated idea of what Western garments in practise are. Notably, they may be dressed themselves following the dress code of

their community which often is still strongly oriented by, or even in-line with, traditional attire: Salvaar Kameezes, Sarees, Sarongs etc.

To illustrate the above point, let's compare the basic process steps of how a Western-style shirt and an Indian-style shirt are assembled (*take special note of the steps marked in **bold***):

- Western-style shirt sewing sequence:
Collar → shoulder seams → **sides (body)** → **sleeves (as a separate entity)** → cuffs sewn to sleeves → **sleeves sewn to body** → bottom shirt hem
- Indian-style shirt (the Kameeze of a Salwaar Kameez) sewing sequence:
Shoulder seams → **sleeves sewn to the body** → **sides (body) from under the arms to the hip bone** → **finish the sleeves** → finish the neckline → finish the edges of the side slits → bottom kameeze hem

As a consequence, it will be of priority to make sure that Western garment making practises are known, and followed, not only in the basic steps, but throughout and in all aspects. This encompasses things such as how basic garments types (shirts, skirts, dresses, trousers, jackets etc.) are assembled, how Western sewing patterns need to be interpreted, fabric cutting techniques to reduce waste, or finishing techniques (e.g. what is a French hem, when and how is it used?).

▷ *Training topic: **Quality – standards, consistency and control.***

Consumers in the West are notoriously picky with respect to their quality expectations. This is even more the case if they buy into the medium and upper price segment – the one that you as an ethical brand will be catering towards. Quality, hence, is a top priority for you, your customers, and logically also for your manufacturers.

At the same time you will find yourself confronted with the fact that:

- Manufacturers and their workers are unaware of how high Western product quality expectations are.
- Western textile products available on the local markets tend to be off casts from production runs for European/US buyers. These are products that have – quality-wise – not made the cut in the factories, and did not get shipped overseas to be sold in the buyer's home market.
Which is not to say that they are unusable or unwearable – in fact, by all but our (exaggerated?) Western quality standards, these garments are likely well wearable quality items.
- For the majority of people in India, 'good' means practically 'good enough' or 'wearable'. By necessity and habit, the quality standards they apply are different to the ones we may apply to what we're buying on the high street.

These points taken together imply that conducting formal and informal to-the-detail training for the factory workers on what Western product quality expectations are, and how to consistently achieve the required quality levels, will be a continuing item on the collaboration agenda with your suppliers.

5.6 Frequent challenges and ideas how to deal with them

▷ *Suppliers' minimum order quantities are higher than what you require / can afford.*

As an enterprise with a need for small or even tiny manufacturing quantities, you will find yourself invariably in the position that fair trade or otherwise certified manufacturers have higher minimums than you require and/or can afford. In other words: they are too large already, and have invested too much into the certification and accreditation processes for small orders, like yours, to be profitable – and therefore feasible - for them. Very small quantities are difficultly to produce even for small suppliers, and in reality cause more trouble than benefit overall – not the last for yourself, since you will have to spend considerable time in India to make sure all is going smoothly. Accept that suppliers do have minimums, and that production for them is not viable if you require smaller quantities than their minimums.

Alternative options:

(1) Consider producing locally – at least in the beginning.

While labour costs will be substantially higher, the overhead that comes with having small amounts of garments produced abroad is relatively high. Producing locally allows to maintain high standards in quality control, short production turn around times and does not need shipping. Once that time is factored in, producing locally may well be cheaper than having it all made in India.

- If you are based in England, the London-based Eden Studio⁴² is a small sized ethical manufacturing and sampling unit with an outstanding reputation, and therefore a very good first port of call. Their minimum order size is 1, with the maximum being in the low 100s.

(2) Join forces with peers:

You will find that you are not the only one trying to find an 'ethical', i.e. certified, manufacturer for your small quantity production runs. Joining forces, in other words: collaborate, with someone in the same position may well be the way to higher order quantities in total – and therefore the path to order from manufacturers inaccessible to you otherwise. Consider collaboration also for (parts of) collections, even beyond merely sharing production runs. This not only will allow you to source from suppliers that you would not be able to collaborate with otherwise, but in the process, will provide you with valuable feedback on your designs – and hence will help remedy errors and subsequent troubles in the early days of the production process.

(3) Work with small suppliers, workshops or individuals that are – obviously – not certified (yet).

This is certainly the most challenging as well as possibly most rewarding approach available. First of all, you will have to find manufacturing units that fit your bill – ethically, quality-wise and price-wise. Once your search is successful, the actual collaboration process can be time consuming and arduous: Be prepared to invest months lining up your first collection, and envisage a time period of 2 to 3 years until you feel confident working with those units in the best possible, most effective way.

➤ ***Organic or fair-trade materials (fabrics, buttons etc.) are hard to find.***

Paradoxically, it is probably easier to source organic and/or fair-trade materials in the (small) quantities you require in Europe/US than to do it in India. Specifically, organic cotton is in high demand on a global level, and most producers, co-operatives have contracts with some of the larger clothing manufacturers whose facilities buy the raw cotton and turn it first into yarn, then into fabrics and finally into finished clothing.

Alternative options:

(1) Locate small or medium sized NGOs or co-operatives that work with disadvantaged rural communities. Specifically cotton farming is a fairly habitual trade in India, and many of those not-for-profit organisations help the farmers to change and grow the cotton organically. You will find that those organisations are often connected to one another, and may be able to help you finding a manufacturing unit that suits your size and goals.

(2) Use an online portal such as Source4Style⁴³ or Offset Warehouse⁴⁴. Their business model is built around the idea of linking up buyers (you) and producers (of the fabric) directly. The money you spend on the platform fee is for administration purposes, i.e. them making sure that your order is delivered on time and to the right place.

In both cases, it is possible to search for suppliers by country, and all the suppliers listed in principle deliver world wide.

(3) Track down other small/er sized companies in Europe that produce ethically in India. Find out where they produce, and research in the same geographical area and community. Chances are you

⁴² Eden Studio London: <http://www.edenstudiolondon.com/>

⁴³ Source4Style: <http://source4style.com/>

⁴⁴ Offset Warehouse: <http://www.offsetwarehouse.com/>

will find either what you're looking for, or, alternatively, people who will be able to point you towards alternatives⁴⁵.

(4) Consider using Khadi fabrics.

Khadi⁴⁶ is by definition a hand-spun and hand-woven fabric produced by cottage workers, often women in disadvantaged communities. It is as such possibly one of the most ethical textile products available on the Indian market. Traditionally, and still commonly, it is made from cotton, although silk, linen and wool variations are also available in the present.

Many Khadi co-operatives and their workers are going out of business by the day as there is a notoriously low domestic demand for Khadi due to it being perceived as old fashioned. Despite it being low regarded in India, Khadi in reality is a high quality, meticulously produced fabric, which due to its design-wise simplicity is quite easy adaptable to modern design requirements.

(5) Teach fabric cutting techniques that reduce waste and make the most of your raw material. Integrate offcuts into your designs wherever possible.

⤷ *No Network, No Contacts, No Leads.*

Finding reliable and capable suppliers is not easy if you are new to India – no matter the situation you're in and the size of your enterprise. Creating a network of people, in India as well as in your home market, that know your preferences, and can point you towards manufacturers and other suppliers that fit your bill, is essential. However, creating a reliable network from scratch can take 2, even 3 or more years. Trying to find the first supplier to collaborate with may well turn out to be the hunt for the needles in they haystack – time consuming, lined with disappointments, and a financial investment with no immediate benefit.

Alternative options:

(1) Look at the members of 'Fair Trade Forum India' (FTFI)⁴⁷:

While they are often craft based, they should be a little knowledgeable in English and organised enough to deal with an enquiry. If they are not suitable themselves to work with you, they likely will be able to point you towards an organisation that may be able to either help you directly, or can on their part introduce you to the type of manufacturing unit you are looking for.

(2) Look at the members of 'All India Artisans and Craftworkers Welfare Association' (AICA)⁴⁸:

All of the AICA member organisations have as their goal the development of the Indian hand-loom and craft sector. In doing so, education, research and hands-on development is first priority. Many of the organisations are small or medium sized, but are clearly also targeting a customer audience outside of India.

Since they are all well networked amongst each other, notably marketing wise, the mother organisation will be able to assist you in finding a suitable organisation to work with.

(3) Look out for NGOs.

There are many genuine people in India who have set up NGOs and doing great work. Textile-related work is in many cases one way of how they generate income. They are generally very well networked and may help you find your way towards the type of organisation (manufacturing unit) you want to work with.

(4) Collaborate with a trusted agent.

If you can afford it, and don't want to re-invent the wheel or want to have it as quick as possible, collaborating with a trusted agent may be the way forward. It's not cheap, but it's relatively straight

⁴⁵ Example of such a company would e.g. be the Berlin (Germany) based **89 Fabrics Lebenskleidung** (<http://www.lebenskleidung.com/> - website currently being translated to English. Contact via e-mail for English service). They specialise in all types of cotton fabrics by GOTS and WFTO certified suppliers. In addition to adhering to GOTS standards for textile dyeing, they specialise on plant dyed fabrics. => Minimums within Europe: 20m. Within India: To be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

⁴⁶ Definition of Khadi on Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kh%C4%81d%C4%AB>

⁴⁷ Member organisations of Fair Trade Forum India: <http://www.fairtradeforum.org/headpage.php?headid=11>

⁴⁸ Member organisations of All India Artisans and Craftworkers Welfare Association (AICA): <http://www.aiacaonline.org/craftmark-members.asp?links=craftm4>

forward. Some agents have a very broad network that reaches from large scale manufacturers to individual tailors, and hence will be able to find suppliers that can accommodate even smaller order quantities.

(5) Get in touch with the India Office of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)⁴⁹ or the International Labour Organisation⁵⁰. Both of them run poverty reduction programs in collaboration with local organisation. Many of these programs are focused on livelihood generation, and revolve around textile skills.

(6) It may sound like a cliché, but the reality is that historically manufacturing industries – in Europe as well as elsewhere – tended to congregate in geographical 'pockets', and India is no exception (cf. Illustration 2, Chapter 3.2). If everything else fails, pick a supplier you would like to work with – but cannot because of one reason or another – and scour their neighbour (including neighbouring towns). The chances are high that you will find other manufacturers with the same speciality. They may not work at the same level yet as your first choice as far as quality or sustainability are concerned, but they will be open to develop themselves into that direction.

⇒ ***Beware: In India, subcontracting is normal, and being a middleman is a trade.***

Networking to find manufacturers, be it cottage industry workers or small sized factories, will have you talk rather sooner than later other with professional middlemen - possibly without being aware of it. Middlemen typically take advantage of the illiteracy of the majority of cottage workers, which places them at a disadvantage and open for exploitation. Middlemen skim off the larger part of a products market value, and often take more than 90 days credit from cottage workers which has a huge impact on their daily lives and cash flow.

On the other end of the spectrum, large manufacturers have themselves access to a network of smaller factories, who again have access to yet smaller units. If you find yourself in talks with a rather large manufacturer that is happy to produce your small quantity order, chances are high that one of the myriad of smaller units in the main manufacturer's network will be producing it. The principle manufacturer though will keep a good share of what you pay as 'introduction service fee', and in addition, you will never find out what the working conditions at the facility, that actually produced your orders, are.

Alternative options:

- (1) Only work *directly* with your suppliers across the whole process: From initial talks the down payment, the sampling process and the final payment.
- (2) If you do work with agents: preferably try and work with Europe-based agents that have a reputation of quality work. If you decide to work with an agent based in India: research his/her reputation, and make sure, e.g. in the contract, that they *only* receive payment from you and not also from the manufacturing unit.
- (3) Pre-empt outsourcing in your contract in the case of manufacturers, and two-sided payments in the case of agents.
- (4) Beyond contracts, make it very clear, in spoken and written, what your expectations are in terms of work ethics.
- (5) Be regularly on site when your products are being made.
- (6) Walk your talk: Be consistent and build trust by e.g. paying your suppliers on time or even earlier, by truly considering them your business partners .
- (7) Walk away if your trust has been broken in a substantial way (e.g. subcontracting happening repeatedly) – the consistency will pay off when working with the next supplier, as word *will* reach them.

⁴⁹ UNDP in India: <http://www.undp.org.in/aboutus/contactus>

⁵⁰ ILO in India: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/newdelhi/>

⇒ ***You're not entirely confident that all happens to (your) ethical standards.***

Despite the best of your efforts, you may never be 100% sure that all work is being done in accordance to your (ethical) standards. To be entirely certain, you probably would have to work on the factory premises year round. If you start to be suspicious despite the thorough research you have done before starting to work with your supplier, the first step is to look for factual proofs, and subsequently address each point individually.

Alternative options:

- (1) Be as often on site as you can afford time-wise and financially.
- (2) Talk to the workers directly, and make sure you have free – i.e. unsupervised, unscheduled – access to the facilities.
- (3) Address any issue you may have directly with the person in charge:
Be concrete, use the proofs you have collected, ask questions, insist in receiving answers. Don't assume to know the answers and reasons already. Be open, be polite, don't assume, but insist in receiving answers.
- (4) Invest in training and education at every opportunity you see.
Specifically in the area of occupational health, labour conditions and quality assurance.
Good training in these areas – take fair trade standards and e.g. SA8000 as guidelines - will reduce the probability of non-compliance.
- (5) Walk away if you really have to.
Do not compromise on what you expect to be basic. It can be tough, after all the effort invested, but it may be needed when the worst comes to the worst. The reputation you create will help you setting up with a new manufacturer.

⇒ ***Language: It's not English.***

English, while an official language of India, is a minority language. Expect to find that any other of the remaining 21 official languages will be what you will be confronted with primarily. Workers don't normally know more than a few words of English, which they have picked up here and there at some point in their lives. This fact will, no doubt, make your life much more complicated than expected – fluent, hurdle-less, direct communication with those actually making your clothes will rarely be possible at all. You will be in need of an English savvy contact person at the manufacturer, who may also need to act as a translator and interpreter if you're on site.

And: This will apply to all aspects of the collaboration with your manufacturer: Oral and written instructions, design patterns and related instructions, deadlines, agreements, etc.

Alternative options:

- (1) Work face to face as often possible:
Avoid remote communication altogether whenever and wherever feasible.
- (2) Learn a few words of the local language (e.g. Hindi) and use it to build personal relationships.
- (3) For professional purposes and important occasions, consider hiring a professional translator by the hour (after all, salaries in India are not *that* high!).
- (4) Use simple language and specialist vocabulary of which you are confident that your partners are familiar with.
Over-specify all your instruction to make them 'fool proof'.
- (5) Get comfortable with things progressing slowly. Accept it as one of the facts that come when doing business with non-native English speakers (often at a distance).

⇒ **Cultural differences in communication: When is a Yes a Yes, and a No a No?**

How to say appropriately 'yes' and 'no' can be surprisingly different from culture to culture.

Europe and the US have overall a fairly straight forward, call it confrontational, approach in when and how 'yes' and 'no' convey agreement and disagreement.

In contrast, in Asia, a mere 'yes' tends to mean 'yes, I've heard what you said' rather than 'yes, I agree with you'. Similarly, a 'no' may be disguised as 'it's rather difficult', as 'we have to look at this later in much more detail', as 'we'll try', or even as a plain lack of any reaction at all.

This cultural bias in how we communicate requests – the typical situation when buying from your supplier – and the respective responses can lead to a fair bit of frustration. Direct confrontation, be it via a clear 'no' or via a 'we cannot complete this order in the time frame you request', is something rare in Asian business relationships *unless they are very much used to deal with Western buyers*.

If you press them for clear cut answers, suppliers/manufacturers first and foremost will say yes to everything, rather than confront you. They will not communicate the real issues to you in the same way as it would happen with a European business partner. This applies specifically if challenges of any type arise: the Indian partner does not want to confront the European party, and hence may not mention problems/issues until it may be too late.

Alternative options:

(1) Avoid a binary, clear cut yes/no approach.

Instead, talk through deadlines, processes, quality problems. Accept that key decisions are not taken in business meetings but 'off records', and communicated later on.

(2) India is a relationship-oriented culture: Build a trust relationship.

Relationships grow from interactions that are, strictly speaking, not directly business related. Get comfortable with exchanging private information: show that you are interested in your business partners as human beings and not just as commercial entities.

There is also a distinct respect for hierarchical structure, rank and for position. To feel comfortable, people need to know what your position in the hierarchy is – and theirs in relation to it.

Finally, be reliable and consistent yourself in every moment that you deal with your Indian partner:

Pay them on time, keep yourself to the deadlines agreed, make it clear what the required quality standards are and stick to them etc.

Building a relationship means also understanding their skills and capabilities, and *reasonably* pushing them to the limit with regards to garment construction so that they can learn new skills.

(3) When there are complications, try to copy the locals on how to resolve them.

Avoid attributing blame to someone in particular (certainly in public) and always keep your composure when in public. People of authority speak in distinguishably low voice – use this tool to your advantage when needed.

Building a long term relationship with suppliers can, and will, encounter rough waters: orders often arrive late and you may get to feel that it would be damaging for the business to use them any longer. You will constantly be reminded of your ethical as well as economic business requirements.

(4) Learn to read Indian body language.

(5) Your own deadlines do not need to be known to your Indian business partner. Communicate them deadlines that are well ahead (1 month at least, more if you can) of those yourself are dealing with.

⇒ **Pitfalls of (remote) communication.**

Communicating over a distance can be complicated if precision is what the game is all about. Even more so, if continents, cultures, textile traditions and native languages separate the communication partners.

In addition to the error sources for face-to-face communication, communication via e-mail or phone adds yet another dimension for potential misunderstandings.

Alternative options:

(1) Over-specify always and everything.

Even if it feels patronising to you: Write all instructions as concise and 'fool proof' as possible:

For design patterns: Create step-by-step instructions that assume no knowledge other than the ability to handle the mechanical equipment. Send samples of how you want the product to look like – including the fabrics to be used.

Get your business partners to send you samples of everything: final samples, fabrics etc. for you to check and sign off.

(2) Train while on site: Educate the factory workers and their supervisors on your expectations, the quality you require, the techniques needed to make the final product.

(3) Repeat important aspects over and over again. Never assume 'they know already', but rather tell again.

(4) If something is not to your standards, don't fix it yourself even if you are able to do it.

Provide clear instruction what, why and how to fix it, and have *them* do it.

Assume this to happen regularly, certainly in the beginning, and *give yourself sufficient time margin to go through this process.*

(5) Consider a repeat order of the same design to be an entirely 'new order', and treat it accordingly: Go through all the same process steps as if ordering a design for the first time.

▷ Acknowledge a producer's speciality .

Building a relationship with your manufacturer also means understanding their skills and capabilities, while *reasonably* pushing them to the limit with regards to garment construction, and help them this way to acquire new skills. It is however a fine line between reasonably pushing to encourage them to develop, and stretching them *beyond* their capabilities and area of expertise.

Being aware at all times of what the areas of expertise of your suppliers are, is essential. While you and them may be willing to go beyond these limitations (e.g. a knitwear unit to work also with wovens) be clear about the efforts and risks involved.

Alternative options:

(1) Ask unobtrusively. Sometimes a person/supplier you work with may be able to do something you didn't know they could, or they know where to get it done . Yet, unless you ask, no one will tell you.

(2) Create designs that work with the technical capabilities and skills of your supplier:

Try not to base designs on skills and knowledge several levels beyond what you expected them to do for you up until the present.

(3) If you want to add a different type of garment to your designs – say, wovens in additions to knitwear – find a different, specialist supplier to collaborate with.

▷ Issues with Quality and Finishing (and their consistency).

There is a lack of understanding what the expected quality level for garments targeted at Western markets is: At high street level, designs need to be perfect and retailers can be very fussy about the smallest of mistakes. This is an issue you will keep encountering continuously when sourcing ethically and which you will have to accept.

This aspect may be made worse by the fact that some factory managers and their workers are well aware that one of the primary reason why to produce in India is the (low) production cost. They themselves may be fairly, but not outrageously, well paid, and hence perceive themselves as 'cheap' labour – in every sense of the word.

Alternative options:

- (1) Be as transparent as you can, notably in your product costing. If asked or required, explain what the garments cost when retailed in your home market, how the price comes into being, i.e. where the money goes.
- (2) From the beginning, plan on training the workers in sewing, finishing techniques, and in quality control.
- (3) Do sampling on site in collaboration with the people in charge. Only sign off on a process step if it complies with your expectations – ideally the level should be even higher than what you expect, allowing for some safety margin.
- (4) Be yourself consistent: If, e.g. during sampling an outcome is not good enough, point out what and why, and how/what to change in order to achieve the goal. Be patient but insist – you will have to go over this 'step-wise refinement' process times and over again.
- (5) Do not fix garments that are not to your expectations yourself. Explain what the issues is, how to fix it – and have it done at the factory.

⇒ *Deadline expectations – India time vs. Western time.*

Nothing happens quickly in India. You probably need 2 to 3 times as much time to get something done than what you're used to. This may become an issue when you work on the one side with India, and on the other with a market like the UK where everything is to deadlines. The relatively speaking short lead times of commercial orders in the West are detrimental to the goal of working ethically throughout your supply chain.

Alternative options:

- (1) Do trial runs of orders before committing to deadlines with buyers, as it can be very stressful meeting deadlines once set.
[Side note: It is amongst others (too) tight deadlines for large orders that lead to unethical practices as manufacturers cannot cope and may end up outsourcing the work.]
- (2) Your own deadlines do not need to be known to your Indian business partner. Give them deadlines that are well ahead (1 month at least, preferably more) of those yourself are dealing with.
- (3) Keep constantly checking on the status of your order and how far it has progresses (this may mean 'too often' by your own standards).
- (4) If you can: be on site as often as possible while it is important for the production of your collections.

⇒ *Lighting at the work place - Power cuts and power shortages.*

Power cuts and power shortages are only too common in most areas of India. Specifically set up industrial areas will be among those suffering less from the phenomenon, but small and medium manufacturers, often located in or adjacent to (low cost) residential areas will accept it as a fact of life. Cuts can last from a second or two, to many hours or even days, largely depending on the time of the day, the season of the year, and the geographical area. Very small entities and cottage workers may not use electricity at all as it is an expensive and limited commodity.

Buildings have small windows in order to remain cool in summer and keep out the cold in the winter. But this also means that tasks that require good lighting – precision work – can only be reliably completed during daylight hours, and will have to cease at dusk.

Alternative options:

- (1) Try to find manufacturers that do not rely on electric equipment exclusively:
Sewing machine manufacturers in India still produce new editions of the classic 'vintage' 19th century-look treadle-powered type for 'private' use. These machines are the equipment of choice for many small-sized manufacturers.

In addition, manufacturers like Singer India offer industrial sewing machines with a dual operation option: they can be powered by an electronic motor as well as by foot treadle⁵¹.

- (2) Give your suppliers financial support to acquire a fuel powered generator (commonly available. Better option: solar powered) to be able and keep working during multi-hour power cuts.
- (3) Learn to work with the fact that working hours equal daylight hours.

⇒ **Concentration risk – 'Spread your Eggs'.**

Environmental disaster, economic and political circumstances, social upheavals – there are many reasons why 'spreading your eggs' makes sense when it comes to having your collections produced. Not relying on one single producer, or only on producers in the same geographical area, helps you to guarantee the stability of your supply if events happen that you have no influence on.

Alternative options:

- (1) As soon as you can: work with more than a single supplier, ideally each located in different geographical areas.
- (2) As you grow, consider including different kinds products into your collection: knitwear, wovens, non wovens, hand-made garments etc. Search out specialists suppliers for each category.

⇒ **Paper work – different countries, different regulations.**

Contracting Indian manufacturers, making payments in/to India, and shipping from India to your home market will necessarily require you to get acquainted at least on a basic level with a whole range of regulations.

Topics that will crop up are amongst others: labour laws in India, contractual requirements in India, import/export regulation and documentation from India to Europe/US, product legislation in your home market (quality, safety, labelling etc.) etc.

Alternative options:

- (1) Talk to the Chamber of Commerce of the state in India your manufacturer is located in, as well as the one India set up in collaboration with the country you will market your collections in (Germany, Italy, UK, US, ...) ⁵². The latter usually have outlets both, in Delhi as well as in your home market. They should also be able to recommend you a trusted lawyer should you require one.
- (2) Have contracts checked – and if needed amended – by a trusted lawyer, who is preferably familiar also with the legislation in your home market.
- (3) Talk early on – well before your first shipment from India – to the customs office in your home market to know exactly what documents they require and what you will be required to pay.
- (4) Check EU/US regulations as well as the regulations of your specific home market to find out what safety and product requirements apply for your collections to be sellable at all. For instance, most European markets will require product labels that state the materials used in both, English as well as the national language. Beware: A number of European countries know more than a single national language, and hence require labels to be written in all of them.
- (5) Keep proper records and receipts of orders, payments, purchases etc.. This will help you with the paper work as you go along learning the administrative ropes.

If you are based in the UK:

- Get in touch with the India Pakistan Trade Unit (IPTU)⁵³. It has been set up with support from the European Regional Development Fund and designed and created by the International Trade Team

⁵¹ Industrial Sewing Machines from Singer India: <http://www.singerindia.net/Product.aspx?id=15>

⁵² List of Chambers of Commerce in all Indian states: http://www.iptu.co.uk/content/india_contacts_chamber.asp#5

⁵³ India Pakistan Trade Unit (IPTU) <http://www.iptu.co.uk/content/index.asp>

at the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. They have a rather detailed amount of information available on topics such as Indian employment law, how to set up a company in India and on Indian business culture.

- If you are based in the UK, become a member of the India Business Council (IBC)'s 'Next Generation Network (NGN)⁵⁴. NGN is a programme that brings together young entrepreneurs and business leaders from all sectors who are interested in the UK-India business relationship. Many of them are – like you – small entrepreneurs, and will be able to help you with advice and contacts.
- Get in touch with the retail specialists at the Department for Trade and Investment of the British High Commission in Delhi (UK Trade and Investment UKTI)⁵⁵ who should be able to give you some indication about legal regulations and requirements you will be dealing with.

6 Annex: Producer, brand and agent details

This chapter is intended to introduce the breadth and width of Indian suppliers and brands that exist, and at the same time give examples of European brands that work with manufacturers in India. As such it is however by no means intended as a complete listing in any of the listed categories.

A tiny minority of the suppliers mentioned in this section is also listed on Shared Talent India⁵⁶, the only online-database of (ethical) Indian suppliers currently available to the public without requiring a membership subscription. Others are WFTO registered and members of Fair Trade Forum in India⁵⁷. And yet others, specifically NGOs and small-scale co-operatives, are less known, likely not certified yet, and possibly introduced to a wider public for the first time thanks to recommendations.

6.2 Small-scale suppliers

▷ *Barefoot College Rajasthan*⁵⁸:

Tilonia appliqué, Barmer appliqué and embroidery, hand-block print textiles, hand-loomed cotton fabrics, leather artisanry, Jaipuri razai quilts, Bandhani tie dye

The **Barefoot College** began promoting rural craft to address problems of under-employment. In the early 1970s, the lack of employment in the villages of Rajasthan forced many of the rural poor to migrate to cities. In the absence of jobs but still hoping for a job, they lived in appalling urban slums. Many of these migrants were traditional craftsmen and artisans who abandoned their trade due to the lack of access to broader markets.

Rural handicraft is one of the programmes which concentrates its efforts on women empowerment, financially as well as socially. Any rural women can train and work as a Barefoot artisan, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, age, schooling or prior work experience. All payments are made through cheques to encourage the rural women to read, write and handle their own bank accounts.

▷ *Berozgar Mahila Kalyan Sanstha*⁵⁹(**BMKS**):

Hand-spinning, hand-dyeing and hand-weaving of Tussar silk

Berozgar Mahila Kalyan Sanstha was started in 1993, with the intention to improve the situation of spinners and weavers from Kajrel village focussing mainly on hand spinning and hand weaving of Tussar silk using innovative weaving techniques and natural colours in the fabric. They now work in 2 states: Jharkhand (Kajrel, Belwa, Tetria, Pitambarkita, Bhagiya) and Bihar (Katoria, Pureni, Dumrama, Bhagalpur); and the main aim of the organisation is income generation and self-reliance for women. At a small level,

⁵⁴ India Business Council Next Generation Network (NGN): http://www.ukibc.com/ukibc_programmes/

⁵⁵ UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) <http://ukinindia.fco.gov.uk/en/business/>

⁵⁶ Shared Talent India: <http://www.sharedtalentindia.com/home/>

⁵⁷ Fair Trade Forum India: <http://www.fairtradeforum.org/headpage.php?headid=11>

⁵⁸ Barefoot College Rajasthan: http://www.barefootcollege.org/cra_approach.asp

⁵⁹ Berozgar Mahila Kalyan Sanstha: <http://www.dastkar.org/bmksp.htm>

there is a barter system that is practised. Spinning yarn on the Charkha is a secondary employment. The organisations comprises approximately 500 members of whom 400 are women. The quality, designs, and the colour of the fabric depend upon the tastes and demands of the customers, and there is ample knowledge of natural dyes.

▷ *Bhuttico*⁶⁰:

Handwoven Bhutti style woollen garments and tweed by the meter

Bhuttico is a not-for-profit cooperative located in the remote Himachal Pradesh village of Bhutti. It was founded in 1944 by 12 local wool weavers that joined hand to make life for themselves easier. A few years later, a local business man with the vision to create local jobs for hundreds of citizen took over the management sceptre, and with a brief stop of activities due to the emergence of power looms in the early 50s, Bhuttico has since organically grown to 385 weaver members. The cooperative is a certified carrier of the Woolmark, and owns its own wool testing lab fitted with state-of-the art testing instruments such as Prespirometer, Climate Control Chamber and microscopes.

▷ *Dastkar Andhra*⁶¹:

Hand-spun, hand-dyed and hand-loomed Khadi fabrics and garments

Dastkar Andhra is an organisation that focused on the various aspects and issues related to cotton hand-loomed textile production in Andhra Pradesh, and collaborates with a number of cooperatives. Its producers operate at a relatively large scale, and stem from the low capital domestic workers of the urban middle and lower income group. Production takes place in five co-operative societies spread across 10 villages in a 50-kilometer radius, and independent groups in Adilabad, Srikakulam, East Godavari, Guntur, Nalgonda, and Prakasam districts in . of Andhra Pradesh. Their aim is to generate year around orders for each of an approximate 150 looms thus generating sustained livelihoods for these producer families.

▷ *Jeevika*⁶²:

Hand-tailored garments and embroidery

Jeevika works with some 5000 women from 42 villages in West Bengal. Jeevika works towards furthering the rights of poor women by improving access to livelihoods and financial resources, challenging patriarchal norms and working against the violation of women's rights. They notably support women trying to escape from (forced) prostitution and abusive relationships.

Since 1998 Jeevika has facilitated a very successful embroidery, tailoring and soft toys programme that includes both training and production units. Jeevika caters to established Fair Trade Organizations as well as small designers and labels from abroad. They use recycled sari materials and other eco-friendly techniques. Currently there are over 60 women earning an income through regular work at Jeevika,

▷ *Khamir*⁶³:

18 types of embroidery, hand-loomed fabrics, Bandhani block prints, tie dyeing, hand-made garments

Khamir was founded in the aftermath of the 2001 earthquake, and works to enable rural creative industries in Kutch district of Gujarat to become profitable and a model of sustainable economic practice. Their artisans come from diverse backgrounds and communities, and the organisation counts with a raw materials depot and a textile laboratory. Trade is one of the approaches in which that Khamir works to address the technological, market-based, ecological, socio-economic, and cultural issues that challenge the sustainability of the local creative industry.

⁶⁰ Bhuttico: <http://www.bhutticoshawls.com>

⁶¹ Dastkar Andhra: <http://www.dastkarandhra.org>

⁶² Jeevika: <http://jeevikadevelopmentsociety.org/board/livelihoods-2/>

⁶³ Khamir: <http://www.khamir.org>

▷ **KV Kuppam**⁶⁴:

Organic cotton cloth, hand-made tailoring, embroidery, appliqué

KV Kuppam, correctly Kilvayattanankuppam, is a village in Tamil Nadu, 30 miles west on the main road from Vellore, the closest city towards a town called Gudiyattu. The village was put on the map by Bishopston Trading Company (BTC), a UK fair trade company whose sole aim is to provide employment for the people of K.V.Kuppam with whom they have been working in partnership since 1985.

Since 1984 the local industry, based on the traditional weaving and tailoring skills, as evolved thanks to the collaboration with BTC. Currently some 300 tailors, cutters, embroiderers, appliqué workers and support staff work full time on the orders placed.

Since 2006 a number of self-help groups have been founded, among them 6 that rose out of collaboration of a total of 98 individual women hand-loom weavers. This allows therefore to source cotton cloth locally.

▷ **Masuta**⁶⁵:

Tasar Silk spinning and dyeing

Masuta has been established with the dual purpose of providing livelihood opportunities to the women who are constrained for resources and also bring about change in the society by allowing the women producers to take ownership of their organisation.

As at the end of March 2010, Masuta is owned by over 2500 producers. Presently, Masuta is the only women tasar yarn producers' collective in India. It is governed by a group of selected producer-leaders who form the Board of Directors. It has also co-opted some development practitioners and subject experts to provide guidance to the company. Presently, the cooperative has presence in the States of Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and Bihar.

Masuta has been kick started by PRADAN (Professional Assistance for Development Action), a non-government, non-profit organisation that works with India's rural poor. Masuta is however entirely self-reliant by now, and financially profitable.

▷ **Norbulingka Institute**⁶⁶:

Thangka appliqué and Thangka hand-painted silk fabrics

Norbulingka artisans create exquisite, high quality products using traditional Tibetan techniques of appliqué and thangka painting. Appliqué Thangka is a nearly vanished art and only currently being painstakingly rediscovered by the efforts of the Tibetan refugee community around Dharamshala. The Norbulingka Institute is dedicated to keeping Tibetan culture alive. Norbulingka is actively contributing to the task of preserving Tibetan culture through providing training, education & employment for Tibetans living in India. It supports an environment in which Tibetan community & family values can flourish. It reconciles the traditional creatively & respectfully with the modern & seeks to create an international awareness of Tibetan values & their expression in art & literature.

▷ **Satya Jyoti**⁶⁷:

Hand-made garments from organic cotton and peace silk

Satya Jyoti participated 2007 and 2008 at the Ethical Fashion Week in Paris, and have won the 'Special Award of the Jury' in 2008.⁶⁸ They only make about 30 garment pieces a month, the vast majority of them entirely hand crafted and finished. They workers at Satya Jyoti have received formal training and their strength lies in paying individual attention to the whole process: from creating the silhouette, to making the

⁶⁴ KV Kuppam: <http://www.kvkuppam.info/>

⁶⁵ Masuta: <http://www.masuta.org/>

⁶⁶ Norbulingka Institute: <http://www.norbulingka.org/>

⁶⁷ Satya Jyoti: <http://www.satya-jyoti.com/clothing.html>

⁶⁸ Ethical Fashion Show review by GreenMyStyle: <http://www.greenmystyle.com/international-fashion-weeks-paris/>

pattern, cutting and sewing. They also run an organic farm and a health centre, support abused women, and promote girls education, vocational training.

▷ *Sadhna*⁶⁹:

Appliqué, Tanka running stitch embroidery

Sadhna began as income generation project in Udaipur, Rajasthan in 1988. The project was started with the aim of providing an alternative means of livelihood and income augmentation for the women of rural, tribal and urban slums in of the Udaipur region. The organisation started to be operational with a small group of 15 women who were trained in the skill of appliqué and embroidery. In the present, different Sadhna programs provide livelihoods for more than 600 women artisans. All the women artisans are owner members of the organization. They have their representation at various levels of decision making of the organization. They are also share holders of the annual surplus that is generated by the company.

▷ *Sandur Kushala Kala Kendra*⁷⁰(SKKK):

Khadi, Lambani embroidery, mirror work

Sandur Kushala Kala Kendra (SKKK) works with 300 Lambani artisans in the Bellary district of Karnataka, South India. Lambanis or Banjaras are a nomadic, gypsy tribe and are well-known for their exquisite traditional hand-embroidery using various stitches and mirror crafts. The Lambanis have their own cultural traditions, and distinct language and customs, and their embroidery is a fusion of pattern darning, mirror work, cross stitch, and overlaid and quilting stitches with borders of Kangura patchwork appliqué done on a base fabric. A distinctive design element is the use of local mud resist handloom fabric, and mirrors, shells and white ornamental trims.

▷ *Sasha*⁷¹:

Aari embroidery, Kantha embroidery & quilting, hand block & screen printing, embossed leather

Starting with only three four-women groups, **Sasha** today is a network of over 150 producer groups in West Bengal, Orissa, the North-East and Karnataka, involving more than 5000 artisans and grassroots producers. Over 70% of them are women. Many of these groups are cooperatives formed by craftspersons, and each group has an interesting story behind it. Some stories involve a group of women striving for economic independence in a male dominated world and others talk about a struggle to earn a living through a craft whose traditional market is slowly dwindling. While these stories have a common thread of determination and courage running through them, they differ greatly depending on the location (urban/rural/tribal), craft (traditional/contemporary) and economic status of the craftspersons involved.

▷ *SEWA*⁷² *Embroidery Centre*⁷³:

Aari, Zari and Zardozi Embroidery

The **Sewa Embroidery Centre** is an effort to provide a livelihood to women living in the Rajiv Nagar, a resettlement slum located in East Delhi. The majority of the women are from migrant families of western Uttar Pradesh and have been using their basic Zari embroidery skills to generate additional incomes for their families through jobs local middle men gave them. Most women cannot work outside their home for cultural reasons, yet, their income is desperately needed for their family's survival.

Since 2008, over 500 women have linked up with the SEWA Community Centres and have earned a total income of about Rs 1,500,000. Each of them visits the centre on a regular basis – twice or three times a week - and collects work orders and raw material. On completion of the work, the members submit the finished

⁶⁹ Sadhna: <http://www.sadhna.org/>

⁷⁰ Sandur Kushala Kala Kendra: <http://www.kushalakalasandur.com/>

⁷¹ Sasha World: <http://www.sashaworld.com/>

⁷² Self Employed Women's Association: <http://www.sewa.org/>

⁷³ PDF provided by One World Action: <http://www.oneworldaction.org/Resources/One%20World%20Action/SEWA%20embroidery%20HW.pdf>

product and receive their payment from the centre. The centre is open from 9 am to 6 pm and the home workers can come in at any time of the day.

The embroidery centre has managed to receive orders from 10 major high street retailers, among the Monsoon and GAP, as well as from high-end brands.

▷ *Stitches of Tibet (SOT)*⁷⁴:

Hand-made garments, carpet weaving, Tibetan appliqué

Initiated in 1995, **Stitches of Tibet (SOT)** has since successfully functioned as a source of financial support for many of the destitute Tibetan women in exile, especially new arrivals from Tibet. The driving force behind Tibetan Women's Association's (TWA) establishment of this handicraft and tailoring project is to enable the "economically disadvantaged women, who lack employment and educational opportunities, to be self-reliant by teaching them tailoring skills". Staying true to its mission, SOT has produced 75 graduates so far. All of the SOT graduates are either self-employed or employed by other institutions and they are financially independent.

6.3 Medium-sized suppliers

▷ *Anokhi textile prints*⁷⁵:

Textile block printing

The **Anokhi** story itself began a little over 30 years ago in Jaipur, when the brand was created. In the early years, the focus was primarily on reviving Rajasthan's traditional techniques of hand block-printing that had lost local relevance, while simultaneously creating products for Western audiences drawing on the local craft tradition. The brand started developing its own repertoire of block designs, and ventured into doing its own research and development. This process was driven by the desire to keep the craft relevant by constantly innovating and also to actually show the craftsmen that new designs were possible.

Their decentralised system of hand block-printing involves the efforts of over 1000 craftsmen and helps them work in conditions of their own choosing while, at the same time, providing them with the security of regular work. Over the years the company also evolved its own philosophy of business built on values that are very much the currency of the day: 'fair trade', 'openness' and 'taking care of people'.

▷ *Bhopal Rehabilitation*⁷⁶:

Leather goods

Bhopal Rehabilitation (BR) was established in 1985 with the aim of assisting and rehabilitating the victims of the Bhopal disaster⁷⁷, especially those who had lost their family members. The basic objectives of BR were to help families in economic rehabilitation by providing them skills in production techniques, specifically in leather craftsmanship and related areas; opportunities for self employment; and help in marketing to ensure a steady flow of demand and supply.

▷ *Chetna Organic*⁷⁸:

Organic Cotton Farming

Apart from being a foundation for farmer support, Chetna Organic is a conglomerate of more than 8000 predominantly tribal farmers in the practices of sustainable agriculture and ethical trade.

It is an effort to support small and marginal tribal farmers from the rain-fed regions of Andhra Pradesh (Telengana), Maharashtra (Vidarbha) and Western Orissa (Kalahandi & Bolangir), and help them to adapt

⁷⁴ Tibetan Women's Association 'Stitches of Tibet' project: <http://www.tibetanwomen.org/projects/sot/>

⁷⁵ Anokhi Textile Prints, Rajasthan: <http://www.anokhi.com/>

⁷⁶ Bhopal Rehabilitation Centre: <http://www.bhopalrehabilitation.com/>

⁷⁷ Wikipedia entry on the Bhopal disaster: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhopal_disaster

⁷⁸ Chetna Organic: <http://www.chetnaorganic.org.in>

agrarian systems which are more sustainable and more profitable, by minimizing their dependence on external factors.

Chetna Organic partners with Solidaridad⁷⁹, Made -By⁸⁰ and others in enhancing the socio-economic status of the disadvantaged farmer families engaged in cotton cultivation in India through producing garments which are traceable down to the farmers' fields.

▷ *Imagination Auroville*⁸¹:

Hand-loomed fabrics, apparel making, textile prints

The principle goal of Imagination is to improve the lives of the less privileged, particularly youth, living in the rural neighbourhoods of Auroville and its vast bioregion. They aim to do this by through teaching and training, to create in the end beautiful, simple and useful hand-crafted items.

Through the provision of livelihoods they aim to stimulate neighbouring village communities through the sustainable production of value-added textiles and handicrafts, produced with the highest respect for the artisan, the local culture and the environment.

▷ *Jacobs Well*⁸²:

Apparel making, Aari embroidery

Jacobs Well employs 'graduates' from the Oasis vocational training courses which are aimed at vulnerable young people from poor backgrounds, with no employment prospects, living in slum conditions on the streets of urban cities. Jacobs Well is an ethical production facility producing high quality efficient and professional production facility for designers and a wide range of different companies. Workers enjoy fair wages and a friendly and safe working environment in addition to further in-house training.

▷ *MORALFIBRE*⁸³:

Kadhi fabrics

Kadhi is a hand-spun, hand-woven fabric, often made from cotton although wool and silk variations are available, produced in cottage-work and that has – interestingly – a carbon footprint of zero. A lack of recognition of Kadhi as a 'fashionable' fabric as lead to thousands of 'Khadi' spinners and weavers losing work in the recent years and more are losing it every year. Most of them are women living in remote villages.

MORALFIBRE works closely with fabric manufacturers, processors, tailoring units, and organizations based in rural and urban locations of Gujarat, India for production. Most of them are co-operatives and social enterprises that reach a total of some 5000 cottage workers. Almost all the production is done within 300 km radius. Eco-friendly and socio-economically sustainable, the company provides work in a fair way to many skilled and unskilled people.

▷ *Assisi Organics*⁸⁴:

Vertically integrated knitwear manufacturing unit (organic cotton fibre → final garment)

Assisi Organics got its starts in the year 1994 pioneering the fair trade manufacture of Cotton garments using Organic cotton. They are a non-profit rehabilitation program in Tamil Nadu India. The company is first of its kind in Tirupur, and run by Fransican Sisters. 120 young women who are handicapped and / or economically disadvantaged are given trainings and support along with food and accommodation. They also have 60 men workers working along with these women.

⁷⁹ Solidaridad Network: <http://www.solidaridadnetwork.org/>

⁸⁰ MadeBy: <http://www.made-by.org/>

⁸¹ Imagination Auroville: <http://www.imagination-auroville.com>

⁸² Jacobs Well: <http://www.jacobswell.biz>

⁸³ MORALFIBRE: <http://www.moralfibre-fabrics.com/>

⁸⁴ Assisi Organics: <http://www.assisiorganics.com/>

They primarily focused on the production of organic cotton knitted products like T-Shirts, sweatshirts and baby- and kids wear.

▷ ***Creative Art of Souls (CAOS)⁸⁵:***
Knitwear, wovens and soft toys

Founded in 2002 with the idea to provide work in the textile industry under fair trade conditions and as environmentally friendly as possible, CAOS has gradually expanded the range of its credentials. From using certified organic cotton only, it is now a GOTS and ISO 9001:2008 certified unit, and in the process of obtaining both FLO certification and ECO-CERT accreditation.

▷ ***Century Apparel⁸⁶:***
Knitwear and wovens

Century Apparel is a medium sized state-of-the-art industrial production unit that has earned the status of a Government of India-recognised export house. They are GOTS, FLO, ISO 9001:2000 and SA 8000 certified.

Their garmenting unit currently employs 450 people and is slated to scale up to 750 in a short time. They offer their employees a canteen, in-house rest rooms (note!, not always the case in India), an auditorium, hostels, a creche, a medical emergency room and a gym.

▷ ***Shared Talent India⁸⁷:***
Supplier Listing, by the London College of Fashion

This supplier database features a range of businesses and organizations focused on developing an Indian textile industry, that is considerate to both culturally and ecologically sound. Many of the suppliers featured here feature pioneering innovative business models, offering empowerment to disenfranchised sectors of Indian society, maintaining and developing traditional skills and combating key environmental issues in the textile sector

▷ ***Zameen Organic⁸⁸:***
Organic Cotton Farming

Zameen Organic is a pioneering farmer-owned marketing company for Fairtrade, organic and pesticide-free cotton. In their own words, they 'work with marginalised farming communities in rural India to improve livelihoods by increasing efficiencies, lowering input costs and raising incomes through certification'.

At the same time they are also 'a supply chain management company, seeking out partnerships with like-minded companies to more evenly distribute profits along the value chain so that our farmers get a 'fairer' slice of the pie'. They work with the textile industry and fashion brands on special projects and to help raise social and environmental standards across our supply chains.

The cooperative collaborated closely with the Agriculture and Organic Farming Group (AOF)'s India chapter⁸⁹, an NGO whose aim it is to facilitate the development of independent, legally-registered farmer cluster associations that are self managed and able to directly sell organic Fairtrade cotton to buyers to strict international requirements.

⁸⁵ Creative Art of Souls (CAOS): <http://www.caos.in/>

⁸⁶ Century Apparel: <http://www.centuryapparel.com/>

⁸⁷ Shared Talent India: <http://www.sharedtalentindia.com/home/>

⁸⁸ Zameen Organic: <http://www.zameen.org/>

⁸⁹ Agricultural and Organic Farming group, India Chapter: <http://aofgindia.org/>

6.4 Ethical Indian Apparel Brands & Designers

▷ *Samant Chauhan*⁹⁰

Samant Chauhan's collections are dedicated to the unsung hero of fashion - the silkworm. A winner of three awards at the NIFT New Delhi fashion show in 2005, he says of his designs: "The silk used for my collections has been hand woven and made from an eco-friendly process without the use of any dyes. Maximum treatment is given to the fabric to make it wearable"⁹¹. The designer as so far participated at EsthEthica in 2007 and 2008, as well as at Ethical Fashion Show Paris in 2008. He is also known for promoting cruelty-free Bhagalpuri raw silk and uses it undyed and down to the usually unused waste bits, achieving unique texturing, interlacing and knits. He works directly with the handloom weavers in Bhagalpuri cutting out the middlemen. At the same time he is reviving a local craft sector: Traditional silk weaving in Bhagalpur is a threatened enterprise — there are few families left engaging in the traditional craft; most have switched over to power looms and have been seduced by the easy availability of cheaper Chinese yarn⁹².

▷ *Anita Dongre*⁹³

Anita Dongre is a haute-couture fashion designer with a track record of over 15 years in the Indian and international fashion industry, including several calls to Bollywood. In 2007, she founded an ethical fashion label under her own name. She was invited to present her work at Paris Ethical Fashion week 2010⁹⁴. Her 5 principle design lines (timeless, iinter-pret, Grassroots, Global Desi, AND) all encompass ethical principles such as the use of bio-degradable, instead of conventional, cellulose⁹⁵.

Grassroots, as her newest line, capitalise on ethical design principles. It is a dress collections made from organic cotton and natural dyes, made to be worn casually as well as on semi-casual occasions.

▷ *Ethicus*⁹⁶

Ethicus is an ethical Indian brand founded as an off-spring from the 3-generations old cotton business⁹⁷ "Appachi Cotton". They run three main sections under their label: fashion, home, and baby. They produce tradition Indian garments like saris made from peace silks as well as a more fusion-style women's and men's collection, complemented by house textiles, baby gift sets, and accessories. Their men's range, for instance, is made entirely of 100% Appachi Ecologic Cotton and dyed with natural dyes. The company closely collaborates with the farmers from whom they buy their organic cotton and the 'Ahimsa' (peace) silk cocoons, as well as with the weaving and spinning communities that produce the silk and cotton fabrics for their collections.

▷ *Mother Earth*⁹⁸

Mother Earth is a new brand of domestic retail chain stores starting with 11,000 sq ft large flagship store in Bangalore. It is a social brand that offers the consumers the best of the Indian natural hand crafted products

⁹⁰ Samant Chauhan: <http://samantchauhan.net/>

⁹¹ Article in 'The Indian': http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/lifestyle/for-designer-samant-chauhan-silkworm-is-fashion-unsung-hero_100150330.html#ixzz0yvVp2hq2

⁹² Blog article: <http://coolbihari.blogspot.com/2009/03/young-turks-from-bihar-samant-chauhans.html>

⁹³ Anita Dongre: <http://www.anitadongre.com>

⁹⁴ Daily News Analysis article: http://www.dnaindia.com/lifestyle/report_paris-ethical-fashion-week-is-a-great-platform-says-anita-dongre_1430389

⁹⁵ Press release by Brila Cellulose Ltd.: http://www.birlacellulose.com/media/press_releases/2009/20090316_livaviscose.htm

⁹⁶ Ethicus: <http://ethicus.in/>

⁹⁷ 'The organic revolution in fashion': <http://expressbuzz.com/entertainment/fashion/the-organic-revolution-in-fashion/197589.html>

⁹⁸ Mother Earth: <http://www.motherearth.co.in/about>

while simultaneously providing livelihoods to the rural artisans and labourers of India. Their suppliers are artisans, NGOs or cooperatives or fair trade organisations.

▷ *Wendell Rodericks*⁹⁹

Starting in 1991, Wendell Rodericks has repeatedly collaborated for his collections with rural weavers and garment makers, notably making use of natural dyes – a rarity in the Indian fashion scene altogether.

Most recent examples are:

The *Eco Goa Room* shows a collection made from fabrics woven and dyed and sewn in small villages in and around Goa, and dyed with guava leaf, pomegranate, red sandalwood and local shrubs.

The *Earth Goodness Collection* where he collaborated with a NGO that works with the tribal communities who live on the foothills of the Amboli Ghats bordering Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra. The NGO distributes free gas for cooking and encouraged the villagers to plant saplings which could be harvested for natural dyes. The collection made use of coarse handspun cotton, viscose jersey and silk. The garments are dyed with guava leaf, pomegranate, rice konji, local plants and indigo.

The *Kunbi Tribe Collection* is the fruit of many years of research and a catalyst to revive the art of Kunbi weaving, named after a tribe living rather marginalised by modern society, in the state of Goa. At the root of a grassroot campaign for Kunbi sari, the designer has managed to source knowledgeable weavers and the collection expertly mixing cotton and silk, woven and knitted textures.

▷ *Upasana Integral Design*¹⁰⁰

Upasana design studio was founded in 1997 by Uma Haimavati in Auroville, Tamil Nadu, India. As a natural response to the tsunami devastation in 2004 in the coastal areas of Auroville, Upasana ventured into the field of social development with a strong focus on application of design for social welfare. The project was called Tsunamika, and since then, Upasana has initiated various projects exploring the potential of Socially Responsible Design.

In Upasana, the scope of design has been enlarged to be integral so that it touches all the facets of a product's life-cycle - those who design and produce it, those who use it, the larger socio-cultural context and the environment.

6.5 Ethical Textile and Apparel Agents

▷ *Remei AG*¹⁰¹, *Switzerland: India & Tanzania*

Remei collaborates closely with organic fair trade cotton farming co-operatives in India and Tanzania, as well as with local fair trade yarn and apparel manufacturing for brands. They have a tracking system in place whereby each garment produced with their collaboration can be tracked & traced.

=> Minimum: 300 pieces per style per colour.

▷ *Sense Organic*¹⁰², *Frankfurt (Germany): India & Indonesia*

Sense Organic is a production and distribution company for GOTS and FLO certified apparel.

They can support their clients both, in producing organic textiles as well as in developing their own label.

⁹⁹ Wendell Rodericks: <http://www.wendellrodricks.com/>

¹⁰⁰ Upsana Integral Design: <http://www.upasana.in/>

¹⁰¹ Remei AG: <http://www.remei.ch/en>

¹⁰² Sense Organics: http://www.sense-organics.com/so_index_e.html

⇒ *Sustainable Organic Farming Systems (SOFS)¹⁰³, Kent (UK): Organic Cotton*

SOFS is a research, communication, training and project management services focused on organic cotton, sustainable agriculture and related value chains. In this capacity, their strength lies in the management and development of relationships between producers and buyers of raw organic cotton.

⇒ *Tammam¹⁰⁴ London (UK): India & Nepal*

Tammam is raw material sourcing and production support specialist.

They source organic and fair trade cotton, peace and organic silks, and Nepali nettle fabrics and banana yarn. They collaborate with a network of GOTS/FLO/WFTO certified suppliers and manufacturers, as well as selected individual artisans.

6.6 Ethical European apparel brands that produce in India: Examples

⇒ *Green Baby¹⁰⁵: Organic and fair trade children's wear*

Green Baby specialises in children's clothing and accessories and care products for kids aged 0 to 6 years, sourced chiefly from certified suppliers in India and Uruguay, in addition to smaller social projects from around the world. Their range includes new mothers as well.

⇒ *Les Fées de Bengale¹⁰⁶: Designer, ready-to-wear women's wear*

Les Fées de Bengale produces parts of their collection. Mostly Kadhi fabric based designs and embroidery, in collaboration with workshops that aim an social reinsertion of highly vulnerable individuals. In addition, they collaborate with an NGO that supports traditional craftsmanship, many of them wool and Khadi weavers.

⇒ *Panchachuli¹⁰⁷: Hand spun and dyed yarns, hand-woven fabrics and hand-knitted garments*

Panchachuli is a co-operative employing over 800 local women in India who work at processing the raw fibre Pashimina (oak silk) and nettle materials sourced from Tibet, then dye, hand spin, weave, knit and beautifully embroider a vast range of luxury accessories and fabrics.

⇒ *Shazia Saleem London¹⁰⁸: High-end ready-to-wear women's wear*

Shazia Saleem London is a high-end fashion label specialising in luxurious handwoven and sustainable textiles, specifically brocades, and combining them with contemporary designs. Every piece in their collections contain handwoven fabrics from either India or Scotland (Harris Tweeds): She designs with handwoven brocades from Varanasi, *ahimsa* and wild silks hand woven from Assam and Orissa, and handwoven *Khadi* cottons from Bengal, Kolkata and Jaipur. In addition, she designs with handwoven wastage and recycled silk, scrap leather and hand-made buttons and embellishments.

¹⁰³ Sustainable Organic Farm Systems: <http://www.sustainableorganicfarmsystems.co.uk>

¹⁰⁴ Tammam: contact: info@tammam.co.uk

¹⁰⁵ Green Baby: <http://www.greenbaby.com/>

¹⁰⁶ Les Fées de Bengale: <http://www.lesfeesdebengale.fr/>

¹⁰⁷ Panchachuli: <http://www.panchachuli.co.uk>

¹⁰⁸ Shazia Saleem London: <http://www.shaziasaleem.com/>