

Fashionable yet sustainable? Rina Singh of Eka and Pallavi Shantam of Buna explain how

Nichola Pais | Updated: Saturday, February 08, 2020, 09:32 PM IST

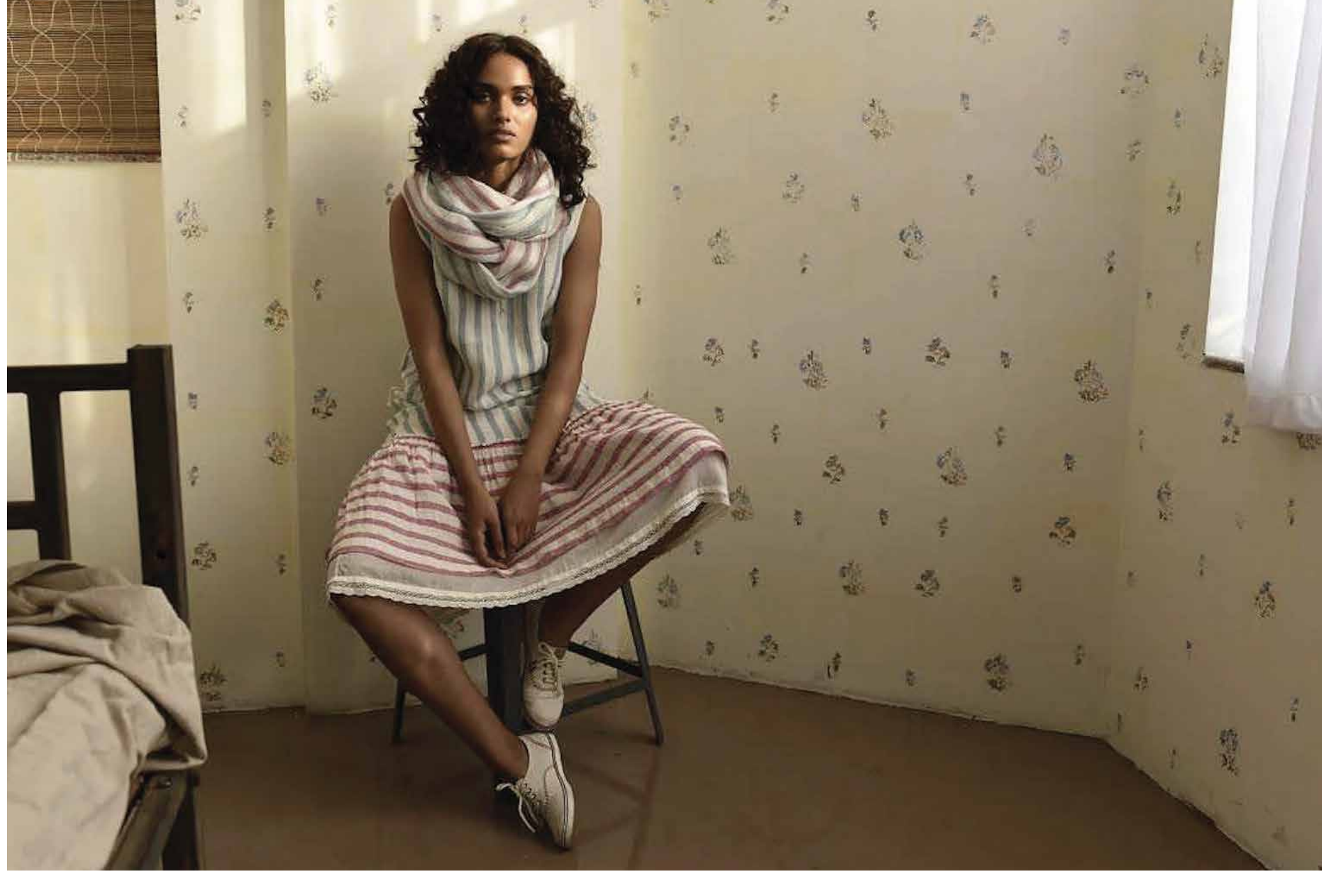


As consumers we have so much power to change the world by just being careful in what we buy,” declared Emma Watson, actress and ethical fashion advocate. Like her ‘Harry Potter’ character, Hermione Granger, she is right as usual. Despite confusion around the term and rather prohibitive pricing, sustainable fashion as a movement is growing in awareness. With the system geared towards greater ecological integrity and social justice, it is an idea whose time has come. “I think sustainable fashion, over the last few years, has become like a hashtag,” observes Rina Singh of label Eka, adding, “It means different things for different people.”

To Rina, sustainability is more of a lifestyle choice, an ideology about how meaningfully you live your life. “And it’s not just about fashion and clothing. It’s a very holistic concept. I think it applies to every other resource that you think of in the world. And clothing is one of the biggest polluters, as we all know.”

Shares Pallavi of Buna, a label that embodies a way of life that is rooted in culture, craft and community, “We strongly believe that fashion in all its forms needs to move towards environmentally sustainable practices including low carbon foot print production, recycling and upcycling.

Sustainability lies at the very heart of Buna. I believe that sustainability is no more a choice in a rapidly changing world. It is rather a necessity. For me a sustainable choice is one that considers the consequences involved after it. Whatever we purchase leaves a trail behind, maybe of plastic, carbon, chemicals, water wastage, exploitation and so on. Minimising this trail is my brand’s endeavour. Sustainable or slow living to me means not only taking good care of our body but also of our extended body - the environment.”



So how does one stay on point with fashion and yet manage sustainability? Well, it isn’t exactly an oxymoron. Singh shows how the gap can be bridged...

- Invest in fashion that’s timeless, that’s classic, that’s more meaningful.
- Choose biodegradable and natural textiles instead of synthetic fibres.
- Recycle your clothes, buy more of a timeless wardrobe that you can wear again and again, like you can wear every season with a new flavour.
- Consider buying less of trends.
- Always invest in quality, well-made products and try to not cut costs when you don’t know how the people who are making it are getting paid.



Singh’s collection at LFW sees her collaborate with TSCO where she worked with the Telangana Textiles and the Mahadevpur Cluster that makes thigh reeled saris. “It is, I think, the only cluster in the world where men and women and artisans are still employed in high reeling practice,” she informs. “I’ve done single and double ikat with the kovalguddam cluster in silk and cotton, I’ve also worked with narayanpet cottons again with borders.”

Rina believes that these clusters require design intervention and upgradation in skills, besides more global and international attention. “I don’t think that the local market can survive on its merit... The weavers have a pressure of making it cheaper, reducing quality of the yarn as well as the product. And eventually the best is not brought forward. This practice might give them a quick income, but in the longer term, I don’t think it will sustain them.

”Buna uses local crafts and support artisan communities. They source their textiles from the weaving communities across India. The Mulmul cotton, cotton-silk, linen, Tangail and Jamdani comes from weavers in West Bengal, the thicker varieties of handwoven cotton from Gujarat. We get our fabrics block-printed in Sanganer and Bagru in Rajasthan.



“All products at Buna are conceptualised and crafted from scratch,” shares Pallavi. “From developing the textiles to illustration of block printing, everything is done in-house to keep the narrative original and fresh. We use our textile waste to make buttons, doris and other trims. We pattern cut in small badges so that the wastage is minimised in garment cutting. Our garments tags are made from recycled seed paper and the bags from our textile leftovers.”

For the collection at LFW 2020 titled “Yours Truly”, Buna have used handwoven cottons and cotton-silks from Bengal further hand block printed by artisans in Sanganer. “This is a slow-made collection using hand-intensive and artisanal techniques,” Pallavi signs off.

Emma Watson would so approve!

(To receive our E-paper on whatsapp daily, please [click here](#). To receive it on Telegram, please [click here](#). We permit sharing of the paper’s PDF on WhatsApp and other social media platforms.)