

PEHCHAAN

TURNING LEFTOVER FABRIC INTO LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES

PROJECT & APPROACH

Pehchaan is a student-led social entrepreneurship venture that transforms leftover fabric from ethnic-wear stores into handcrafted products while creating opportunities for women to develop practical artisan skills.

The project began with two interconnected challenges: usable textile material going to waste and women facing barriers to accessing employment opportunities. Rather than treating these as separate problems, Pehchaan sought to connect surplus fabric with the skills, training, and commercial opportunities needed to turn it into marketable products.

Working with ethnic-wear retailers, including **Odhni**, **WNW**, and **Amyra**, we developed a model in which leftover fabric could be repurposed into products such as potlis, tote bags, and other fabric-based accessories. Women were supported in learning the production techniques required to create these products, with the aim of connecting their work to actual retail demand.

Pehchaan was built around a simple principle: sustainability initiatives become more meaningful when the materials recovered can be used to create products with commercial value and opportunities for people to participate in their production.

The venture combined three elements:

- Textile upcycling: Giving leftover fabric a second use by incorporating it into new products.
- Skill development: Creating instructional tutorials to support women in learning product-making techniques.
- Market access: Partnering with ethnic-wear retailers to sell products through store contracts and, at times, retail sales within partner stores.

The goal was not simply to make products from waste, but to build a practical link between material reuse, artisan skills, and the marketplace.

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A BROADER DEFINITION OF SUSTAINABILITY; WHAT I LEARNED; VISION AHEAD

Pehchaan reinforced my understanding that sustainability is not only about reducing waste. It is also about building systems through which underutilised resources can acquire value and the people involved in that process can access meaningful opportunities.

The project brought together material reuse, practical instruction, product development, and retail sales. Each element depended on the others: leftover fabric needed a viable application, production techniques needed to be communicated, and finished products needed a route to market.

Building Pehchaan gave me practical exposure to the realities of running a small social enterprise. I learned to think beyond the initial idea and consider how products would be made, priced, delivered, and sold.

Managing production and retail relationships also made clear that a social objective alone does not guarantee a sustainable operation. The venture needed products that could meet commercial requirements while remaining aligned with its environmental and social purpose.

Creating tutorial videos further highlighted the importance of communicating processes clearly. A technique is more useful when it can be demonstrated, understood, and revisited during production.

Most importantly, Pehchaan challenged me to think about entrepreneurship as the process of connecting resources, people, and markets to solve a problem. It showed me that a venture's impact depends not only on what it intends to achieve, but also on whether its operating model can turn that intention into tangible outcomes.

Pehchaan represents an early step in my exploration of social entrepreneurship and commercially viable sustainability. It brought together operational management, pricing, retail partnerships, and a social mission in a single initiative, shaping how I approach the relationship between business performance and social value.

The experience continues to inform my interest in building ventures that combine commercial discipline with a clearly defined purpose.

PEHCHAAN AT A GLANCE

2,000+ — UPCYCLED PRODUCTS PRODUCED

30+ — ARTISANS SUPPORTED THROUGH THE PROJECT

8+ — RETAIL STORES REACHED

₹1.15 LAKH+ — REVENUE GENERATED

