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## **Sustainable art practice and involvement of a community-based social project.**

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### **Abstract**

*Indian knowledge system associated with the traditional methodology aesthetic philosophy and cultural heritage. And this study explores sustainable art practices within the Indian art field through a practice-based research methodology. The primary objective is to examine art projects, case study and the creative processes, as well as their ecological and social impacts on society. It is imperative to acknowledge the environmental crisis of the current century and to adapt our ecological framework to safeguard the future. This research focuses on the work of artists engaged in sustainable art practices, aiming to propose solutions for waste management and the reduction of ecological impacts associated with pollution. The study examines sustainable art practices in visual art, analyzing the work of artists made to incorporate recycled and eco-friendly materials, thereby promoting ecological and environmental equilibrium. In contemporary contexts, Indian artists are addressing global ecological concerns through innovative and ethical art-making. Sustainability in Indian art also encompasses social responsibility, as well as collaborative and community-based art projects. This research emphasizes sustainable artwork utilizing recycled materials. On the Indian subcontinent, individuals are engaging with diverse art mediums, both organic and inorganic. The study discusses the broader trend of contemporary Indian artists experimenting with recycled materials and eco-friendly mediums. This research explores the novel concept of development concerning both material and subject matter, illustrating how sustainable art practices contribute to raising environmental awareness and impacting society. Sustainable art practices represent an integrative process wherein artists create works from recycled and waste materials that are environmentally friendly, thereby minimizing environmental harm and influencing societal change. This process encompasses two aspects: material and ecologically friendly environmental materials. My research highlights certain facets of the Indian art field, focusing on the recycling and natural material processes, as well as specific elements of sustainable art practices undertaken by artists.*

**Keywords**—Sustainable artwork, IKS, Indian art installation, Multi-layer plastic, PlasticValla.

### **Introduction**

We are living in a contemporary society in which we are consuming enormous resources, including electronic gadgets, furniture, cloth, processed food, and household items daily; those products are mostly wrapped with non-biodegradable material such as plastic. One of the major problems for the environment is plastic waste. The quality of that plastic material is different on every level, from the hardest to the lowest density for producing and packaging goods. A study shows that per person, use of plastic is 11 to 13 kg every year, in the 59 to 62 percent of plastic material used in wrapping the product. All consumable products are packed by high- and low-density polyethylene: forms including



carry bags, milk pouches, and multi-layered food packaging. sourced from woven sacks, rigid containers, and bottle caps. PET (polyethylene terephthalate) primarily single-use water and beverage bottles, PVC & PS (polyvinyl chloride & polystyrene) coming from pipes, insulation, and disposable foam cups or packaging. Those objects have been made with many materials of different quality and grade. After utilization and consumption, those wastes occupy the landfills; we generate 26000 tons of plastic waste a day. and recycle only 60 percent of 15600 tons; the rest of the 10400-ton unprocessed or unutilized waste goes in the landfill and is littered outside of the environment without responsibility. The plastic material can take 20 to 500 years to dissolve in earth. Thermoplastic PET and PVC plastic are reused in the regeneration of products, and the multilayer plastics (MLPs) are harder to reuse or recycle. They are also one-sided usable materials or compounds.

Sustainability in art making involves creating works that minimize harm to the environment, often utilizing recycled materials, natural objects, and eco-friendly techniques and materials. It aims to spread social awareness about sustainability and ecological issues. Sustainable art is a vital practice for addressing environmental concerns through creative expression. This research addresses a case study of Manveer Singh Gautam, who is using the multilayer plastic and other plastic waste as art material for the installation and sculpture, and who addresses the growing problem of single-use plastic. Through their innovative art practice process. The artist transforms discarded plastic packaging into artworks.

### **Methodology**

In this research, a combination of the mixed-method approach, data was collected by the artist and research paper. This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical research methodology within the framework of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) to examine sustainable art practices in contemporary India with a case study of Manveer singh Gautam artist. The research is based on primary data collected from the interaction interview with the artist, including discussions, observations of artistic processes, and documentation of their projects and work. and secondary data, peer-reviewed journal articles, newspaper articles and online articles, exhibition catalogues, artist statements, environmental conservation, and other online data analyzed.

### **Contemporary Eco Art and activism In India**

Community participation has become a dynamic aspect of sustainable art practices in contemporary India. Today, many environmental art projects are supported by government agencies, non-governmental organizations, private institutions, and cultural foundations and art galleries that provide financial support, collaboration, and platforms for artists to engage with local communities. These initiatives encourage artists to address environmental problems while raising public awareness through art practices and interaction.

The contemporary sustainable art movement has emerged as an important system of environmental activism. In this movement, the collaboration of private and government sectors has played an important role in funding and providing material to the artists. With the participation of the different sectors, add the enhancement of the artists' practice and society participation and engagement. And the artist used creative expression and activity to raise the awareness about waste management, climate change, biodiversity, and land pollution. Those works often engage directly with ecosystems, inviting audiences to reflect on the relationship between humans and nature. Through exhibitions, public installations, workshops, and



community participation, it encourages dialogue, promotes environmental education, and motivates people to be responsible consumers and adopt a sustainable lifestyle.

The development and uses of discarded industrial and non-industrial material started in modern times with modern artists in Indian art. Artists used different materials like Nek Chand, Mrinalini Mukherji, Vivian Sundaram, Sudarshan Shetty, Subodh Gupta, Tushar Jog, and Manish Nai. In the contemporary scenario, artists are practicing experimenting with discarded metal, scrap, recycled plastics, industrial waste, and other environmentally friendly materials. Their art work spreads awareness and demonstrates how art can become a powerful medium for environmental responsibility and change the individual perspective. By transforming waste material into artworks, these artists reduce the burden on landfills and the environment but also encourage creativity, expression, innovation, and public engagement. Their practices show that discarded waste materials can be reused as artistic resources, creating the artwork as a solution for the society to spread knowledge and give awareness regarding waste consumption.

An important example of art activism in India was initiated by artists and curators. In the early stage, in Delhi, artist Arun Kumar HG worked with the plastic polyethene sheet, and currently he is working with the organic material. He initiates the "Where Does It Go?" project collaboration with the municipal corporation of 49 sector Gurgaon in 2019 (Aastha Ahuja 2019). The initiative brought together twelve artists for a ten-day residency focused on waste management and environmental awareness. During the residency, the artists created eleven large-scale immersive installations using discarded materials such as plastic bags, PET bottles, aluminum cans, glass bottles, plastic containers, plastic bottles, and industrial and electronic waste, in which they used discarded plastic material, glass bottles, cans, and industrial waste. In that, the municipal corporation initiated the provision of scrap material from different locations, and the artist and gallery provided the artist collaboration. Each installation transformed the waste into the creative expression and communicated a powerful message about the increasing waste generated by contemporary society and emphasized the importance of waste segregation, recycling, and responsible consumption. By transforming everyday waste into large installations of engaging public artworks, the project encouraged visitors to reflect on their own environmental practices and demonstrated the potential of art to inspire social and ecological revolution.

The other initiative was done by the Goa artist Subodh Kerkar, a site-specific installation. He is well known for creating site-specific installations using shells, palm leaves, sand, pebbles, and recycled plastic. One of the most famous work titles, Carpet of Joy, was created with the 100000 discarded plastic bottles, drawing attention to the growing problem of plastic pollution (Eve Lemesle 2017).

Sustain India was a collaboration of artist activist Thukral & Tagra, curator, and the Council on Energy, Environment, and Water (CEEW). the first edition, the second and third editions in 2024 and 2025 and 2026. They brought the artist across India. In this initiative they focused on the indigenous knowledge and public policy and research-oriented approaches. That exhibition showcased the locale material cultural practice and everyday human experience as a transformation of the material into expression and created a dialogue, climate awareness, and community daily practices. The Sustain India exhibition was the third edition, inaugurated in Bikaner House in February 2026.



### **PlasticValla: A Case Study of Manveer Singh Gautam**

Manveer Singh Gautam, also known as PlasticValla, works as an artist in New Delhi; he adopted that title when he went for collecting the plastic from neighbors. Children shout to family and say that PlasticValla comes for the plastic collection. He has worked with discarded plastic packaging and hard multilayered plastic MLP waste. He developed his method and a new philosophy about the work in which he is involved with the neighboring society. And spread the awareness regarding the plastic disposal and reuse and recycling of plastic as material in artwork. He collects the plastic material from the neighbor and surroundings. Also, people send the waste plastic package by post, and he processes and converts it into the domain to upcycle and uses it as art material.

His philosophy related the beauty of nature and aesthetic “art for nature.” With this concept, he tries to solve the problem and is aware of the people's responsible behavior against nature. And addresses the environmental crisis and minimizes plastic waste pollution in landfills. In his work, approaches and processes are a collaboration of artists and society in which artists and society get together and participate as a game changer and activism movement for the environment. Manveer invented an extraordinary innovation created by him. That is a “habit change box” (Figure no. 5) that is distributed to the individual for collecting the recyclable plastic waste. He visited the area for collection every two weeks; they weighed the waste and made the entry in the register. In the early stage he collected 25 to 30 kg of plastic a month; now he collected 30 to 50 kg in a month from households and school. The adoption of the box automatically changes the habits of the people. In this the process starts from the collected waste from approximately 400 families of Chhatarpur, Saket, Maidan Garhi, and Neb Sarai, Delhi. The artist and volunteer are working on the collection and segregation process. Every week volunteers collect the plastic waste from the area with the register entry and submit it to the studio. In which he collects 60% cleared bubble wrap transparent plastic and 30% to 40% hard-layered grocery and packaging recyclable waste. After the deposition of waste, other volunteers segregate and wash, clean, and dry the waste and segregate the domain. The wrapper is compressed into the strip with hand folding and bound with a stapler gun vise and kept in the box with the color segregation and utilized as a color and work vise. To date he has utilized 10 tonnes of waste plastic; in the future he has marked a target of 50 tonnes in the next 5 years. That process emerged and evolved with the art process, and people connected and engaged with him. In which many volunteers are working with the artist. Engagement of people at every level shows an immersive collaboration of the society and the artist. He is processing and engaging society, playing a game-changer role for waste management. And his work is a transformation of the nature of art with the plastic material into the landscape installation and sculpture. After the completion of all the processes, they put the artwork into the art installation according to the requirement and utilized the artwork and installation. This initiative demonstrates how small changes in individual behavior can collectively reduce plastic pollution and contribute to a cleaner environment.

The artist is actively working for nature, society, environmental conservation and enhancement for the future, and spreading awareness of responsible consumption behavior and waste management and consumption. His systematic approaches and framework management included the measure step and how they manage the plastic waste and the process of the segregation domain, i.e., and waste collecting of household plastic material, waste management, demonstrates how discarded materials can be transformed in creative expression. After the collecting, he segregated the domain waste and processed it, and after the cleaning and drying process, he put it into the boxes according to the category.



He actively contributes to environmental preservation and sustainable development by evolving public awareness of responsible consumption and waste management, with a specific focus on plastic waste mitigation.

The Manveer Singh studio was transformed into an experiential learning center. With the studio practice, he plays a role as an art educator; the artist demonstrates the workshops across the institution where the students came to participate, engage with creative processes, and understand waste management through the work creation. promoting a clean environment, promoting consumption behavior, promoting clean land, reducing plastic waste, and promoting sustainable development in the workshop in school and institutional areas. where artistic practice and public participation work together to promote responsible waste disposal and sustainable living, reduced plastic waste, minimized consumption, and sustainable development. Overall, Manveer Singh's practice demonstrates how contemporary art can serve as a catalyst for environmental awareness, community participation, and sustainable development. By integrating artistic innovation with public engagement, he transforms waste into a resource, encourages ecological responsibility, and demonstrates the potential of art to inspire meaningful social and environmental change.

### **In the past 8 years, he achieved 9 sustainable goals.**

GOAL 4: Quality Education: promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

GOAL 6: Clean Water and Sanitation: sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

GOAL 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure: promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.

GOAL 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

GOAL 12: Responsible Consumption and Production: sustainable consumption.

GOAL 13: Climate Action: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

GOAL 14: Life Below Water: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.

GOAL 15: Life on Land: Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems; sustainably manage forests; combat desertification; and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

GOAL 17: Partnerships to Achieve the Goal: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable

### **Work done by artist**

Manveer Singh Gautam has done his graduation and post-graduation from the College of Art in painting specialization. He experiments with plastic waste. His philosophy related the beauty of nature and aesthetic "art for nature." With this concept, he tries to solve the problem and is aware of the people's responsible behavior against nature.

"My artistic journey began with getting inspired by nature through landscape paintings. But soon, I realized my paintings are only benefiting me and the buyer. I wanted to do more. I didn't want nature to be just my subject anymore. On researching, I was shocked to find that farmers are finding layers of plastic instead of water while digging their wells. In the past few years, my life and work have been centered on how planet Earth is transforming into a plastic planet," Manveer tells The Better India. "I keep all the artwork with me after displaying them in my studio, given that all the materials will take hundreds of years to decompose" (by Manveer).

He starts this inventive expedition from 2017 to collect the plastic and explore it. He derived from a painting background; he very much enjoyed doing landscape painting at that time. He did "work on nature"; now he has shifted to "work for nature." He creates his first work, Futuristic Earth Core, in 2018 (figure 1), which comes when he creates inspirational work about how the art relates to the specific site, with local folk-art traditions, surrounding landscape, nature, architecture, and the space itself playing a large role. Untitled, 80"X100", used plastic wrappers and aluminum wire net, in private collection in Germany. 2019-2020 (Figure no. 2), "Shehari Zameen" of The Urban Land, Sangeet Shyamala 2022 (figure no. 3), "Concrete Himalayan 21st Century" (2023) (figure 4) by this work, he interprets the contemporary unsuitability and drastic change in the construction of the mountain, the conventional to unconventional construction of material, and the improper disposal of plastic in the Himalayan valleys. International Art Residency at Art Hub on Environmental Awareness in Abu Dhabi organized by the Environment Agency of the Ministry of Culture, UAE, 13th December 2019 - 13th January 2020. UTSHA Residency Programme, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, 15th February - 18th March 2020.



Figure no. 1



Figure no. 2



Figure no. 3



Figure no. 4



Figure no. 5



## Conclusion

This study examined sustainable art practices in contemporary India through the sustainability context; Manveer Singh is addressing the ecological challenge. Plastic waste is a measure of global concerns regarding climate change and environmental degradation, which continue to grow. Sustainable artistic practices have the potential to play a significant role in promoting ecological awareness, responsible community behavior, and sustainable development. The research demonstrates that sustainable art allows us to work with discarded materials and environmental plastic waste. It signifies a holistic approach that combines environmental waste management awareness, artistic innovation, creative approaches, and social engagement. Manveer Singh utilizes 10 tons of waste transformed into installation and sculpture to date. In the future the 50-ton target is to be achieved. Association with 400 family and institution engagements of the student helps to spread the awareness about ecology and plastic consumable behavior and indicate the community behavioral change. He developed the philosophy “art for nature” and the process of the collection, segregation, inventory, and execution of the installation. Can be adopted by anyone so that it can help the environment and develop the relation with sustainability. The study highlights that sustainable art contributes not only to environmental conservation, social collaboration, and community empowerment. By involving local communities in waste collection, recycling, and creative production, artists support public participation and demonstrate how artistic practice can generate positive environmental and social impact.

He demonstrates how art can play a role as a catalyst for environmental education and behavioral change through creative installations, collaborative projects, and community participation. Their practices encourage responsible consumption, recycling, and collective action while expanding the possibilities of contemporary artistic expression.

The research further found that the principles of the Indian Knowledge System—including Prakriti, Aparigraha, Seva, Samskara, Lokasangrah, Vasudhiva Kutumbakum, and Jeevan Darshan Those philosophies depict the way of living of human beings with responsibility. those terms to enhance the life of people with a collaborative approach, moral ethics, responsible consumption, selfless service, effective nature, and a way of living. Those principles reflect Manveer Singh's work and process approaches, and they provide a strong philosophical foundation for Manveer's sustainable art practices. These principles emphasize the knowledge that environmental waste management is both an ethical duty and a collective responsibility. Future research may further explore the impact of eco-art on public policy, environmental education, and community-based conservation initiatives in India and beyond.

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