

## ARTICLE (11-14)

### THE PROBLEMS WHICH COVER US

What if I told you that the water used to make the cotton shirt that you bought at the mall the other day would be enough to keep a single person hydrated for 900 days? Or, those clothes that you decided to buy just for a lark and disposed of the very next week would have most probably released microplastics that got transported to remote places like the Arctic? Well, none of the above is fiction.



*New trendy clothes, fast fashion.*

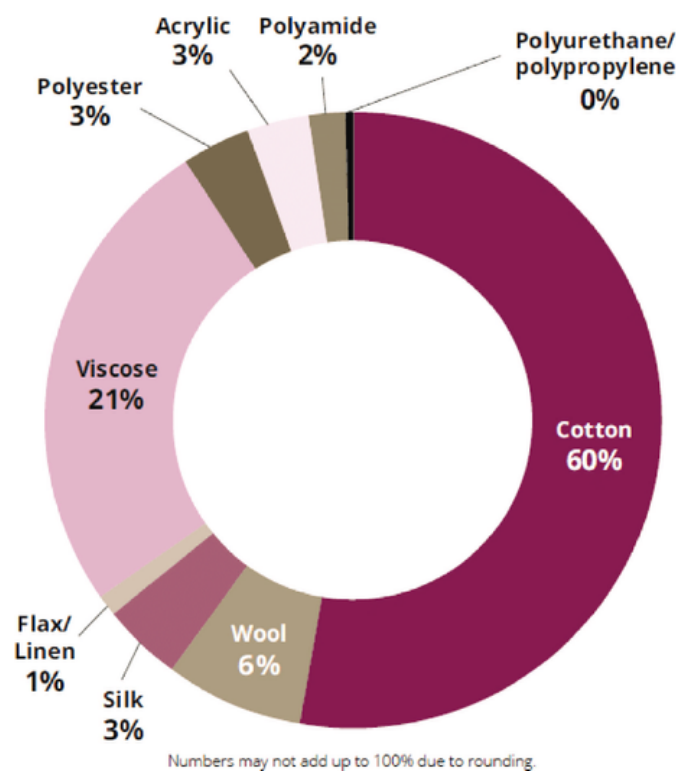
‘Fast fashion’ has now been established as one of the main reasons for pollution. On the other hand, sustainable fashion is no longer a fad that will pass away. It is actually meant to last longer and not harm our planet. That is why it is called ‘slow fashion’. However, switching from fast to slow is easier said than done. There are unimaginable problems which come with sustainable fashion. Hard to believe? The truth is that people are disillusioned with sustainable materials because of greenwashing. Also, awareness about sustainable fashion is very low. Why, what, how - let’s get into understanding how this problem that covers us up, is actually exposing our world to the worst.

#### Fashion Trends and Climate Impact

Marc Jacobs, an American fashion designer once quoted, “Clothes mean nothing until someone lives in them.” People love fashion trends and new trends are formed very fast.

The term fast fashion is used to describe the production of high volume, quick turnaround, low-cost clothing. Fast fashion first appeared in the 1990s as corporations, to increase profits, invested in cheaper production methods to mimic fast paced fashion trends. In 2021, the apparent consumption of apparel worldwide was approximately 168.4 billion pieces. According to estimates of the Statista Consumer Market Outlook, this value is expected to increase in the coming years to 197.3 billion pieces by 2026.

Let's understand what this means for our planet with polyester as an example. When polyester experiences friction, heat, or wear and tear it releases microplastic fibres which cause many problems. They spread quickly to various places, including remote places like the Arctic. They also end up in soil. They are found in human and animal bodies. They enter these bodies by ingestion, inhalation and dermal exposure. It can take over 200 years for the materials to decompose in a landfill. During the decomposition process, textiles generate methane, a harmful greenhouse gas and leach toxic chemicals and dyes into the groundwater and our soil.



*Water footprint of different type of fabric.*

### Sustainable Fashion

The world is getting revolutionised with clothing materials which are sustainable. There are many factors which are required to call a piece of cloth sustainable. According to Wikipedia, “Sustainable fashion is a term describing products, processes, activities, and actors aiming to achieve a carbon-neutral fashion industry, built on equality, social justice, animal welfare, and ecological integrity. Sustainable fashion concerns more than addressing fashion textiles or products.”

Sustainable fashion also fulfils the following SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals):

- Goal 3 - No microplastics will be released from synthetic clothes so none will enter the human body
- Goal 6 - No microplastics will spread through water and those drinking it or living in it will not be in danger
- Goal 12 - All garments shall be responsibly produced and used
- Goal 13 - Using sustainably-made clothes will reduce the rate of climate change
- Goal 14 - No microplastics shall be consumed by underwater life forms and less pollution shall be produced underwater
- Goal 15 - Animals and birds shall not eat synthetic clothes mistaking them for food

## The Changemakers

Let's have a look at some of the local apparel brands which claim to be sustainable:

### ● Arvind Ltd.

Arvind Ltd., India's largest textile-to-technology conglomerate from Ahmedabad, keeps sustainability in its vision. It has been working for the betterment of local farmers, and has also had tie-ups with other companies, to work towards a sustainable future. Recently, it announced a joint venture with PurFi Global LLC, a sustainable technology company specialising in

rejuvenating textile waste into virgin quality products to reduce the amount of textile waste going to landfills. In an interview with the Indian Retailer Bureau, Punit Lalbhai, Executive Director, Arvind Limited said, "Sustainability and innovation are key pillars of our strategic growth. We have always centred our approach on innovative ideas and sustainable initiatives. With PurFi Global, we will not only provide an innovative solution to deal with the issue of textile waste but will also strengthen our motto of being Fundamentally Right."

### ● Jugna

Based in Ahmedabad, Jugna is a sustainable fashion brand for women. In an in-depth interview I conducted with Jugna Fadia, the owner of this brand, I found out that all the clothes made by this brand are made from natural sources and are hand-dyed with natural, eco-friendly dyes, making the final product skin-friendly as well. Jugna said, "Our fabrics are completely biodegradable and leave no traces. While crafting the product, we make sure that no water is wasted."

Talking about ‘greenwashing’, when an organisation spends more time and money on marketing itself as environmentally friendly than on actually minimising its environmental impact, she said, *“I think more than a brand convincing you that they aren’t greenwashing, consumer awareness matters; as a consumer, please make sure that you’re aware about whatever you’re spending your money on, one can always go on the website and look for all the information about the product. As a brand owner, my job is not to just convince clients to buy. I like them to know and understand my brand, so they’re not misled and know what they’re buying.”*

The writing is on the wall. Take steps to take care of our environment now, for tomorrow will be too late. Start taking small steps towards sustainability; switch to sustainable fashion.

Be Sustainable, Be Conscious!

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