



# MLA- DOST. DOBRŌ

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Fashion of yeasterday,  
Fashion of today

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# The Environmental Cost of Fast Fashion

by Pavla Faltová

**Fast fashion has become the default mode of the clothing industry: cheap, trendy garments produced at lightning speed, designed to be worn a handful of times and then discarded. While this cycle feeds consumer appetite for novelty, it comes with enormous environmental consequences that we can't ignore.**

## Overproduction and Waste

The fashion industry produces billions of garments every year, many of which never even reach consumers. Unsold clothes are often destroyed, burned, or dumped in landfills. Those that are bought typically don't last long—poor quality fabrics and stitching mean clothes fall apart or go out of style quickly. The result: mountains of textile waste. Globally, an estimated 92 million tons of textile waste are generated annually, and less than 1% of that is recycled into new clothes.

## Water and Resource Use

Producing clothing is resource-heavy. Cotton, one of the most common materials, is extremely water-intensive; one T-shirt can take 2,700 liters of water—the amount a person drinks in about 2.5 years.

Synthetic fabrics like polyester might save water, but they come with another cost: plastic pollution.

## Microplastic Pollution

Every wash of a polyester or nylon garment sheds microplastic fibers into waterways. These fibers are too small to be filtered out by most wastewater systems and end up in rivers, oceans, and ultimately our food chain. The fashion industry is a major contributor to the estimated 35% of microplastics in the ocean that come from synthetic textiles.



## Chemicals and Pollution

Dyeing and finishing fabrics involve toxic chemicals that often end up in rivers, especially in countries where environmental regulations are weak. Communities living near textile factories face contaminated water supplies, damaged ecosystems, and health risks. Meanwhile, the carbon footprint of global shipping and energy use in textile production further drives climate change.

## The Bigger Picture

Fast fashion encourages a throwaway culture, teaching consumers that clothes are disposable. This stands in direct opposition to sustainability. The environmental impact doesn't just lie in discarded fabric; it's also in the wasted energy, polluted water, and the fossil fuels burned to keep this machine running.

## What Needs to Change

Solving this problem requires shifts on multiple fronts:

Brands need to slow production, invest in sustainable fabrics, and design for durability.

Governments must enforce stricter environmental standards and regulate textile waste.

Consumers should rethink habits: buy less, choose quality over quantity, and extend the life of clothes through repair, reuse, and second-hand shopping.

Fast fashion isn't just an issue of taste or style—it's a serious environmental crisis hiding in our wardrobes. Every cheap T-shirt or €10 dress comes at a cost far greater than the price tag, and unless the industry and consumers change course, the planet will keep paying the bill.



Source: Baosquared



# The Hidden Cost Paid by “Dumping Countries”

by Pavla Faltová

**Fast fashion doesn't just trash the planet in general. It pushes the worst consequences onto specific countries, mostly in the Global South. While consumers in Europe and North America cycle through cheap clothing at record pace, the waste and pollution are exported elsewhere. These so-called “dumping countries” bear the environmental, economic, and health costs of an industry built on exploitation and weak regulation.**

## Second-Hand or Just Waste?

Every year, millions of tons of used clothes from Europe and the U.S. are shipped to countries in Africa, South Asia, and Latin America under the banner of “second-hand clothing.”

The truth? A huge percentage of it is unsellable trash—clothes too worn-out, poor-quality, or outdated to be reused. Local markets are flooded with textiles they cannot absorb, leading to massive landfill buildup and open-air burning.

Ghana's capital, Accra, is one stark example: its Kantamanto market receives around 15 million used garments every week, and nearly half end up as waste.

Once this waste piles up, the impact is brutal. Landfills overflow, waterways get clogged with synthetic textiles, and open burning releases toxic fumes into communities.

Unlike in wealthy countries, where waste management systems at least partially mitigate damage, many “dumping countries” lack the infrastructure to handle this constant avalanche of foreign trash.

Local ecosystems pay the price: soil contamination, poisoned rivers, and air pollution that lingers for decades.

## Local Industry Crushed

Dumping doesn't just harm the environment—it destroys local textile industries. Countries that once had thriving clothing and fabric production now rely heavily on cheap imports, wiping out jobs and undermining self-sufficiency.

When you can buy a used T-shirt from Europe for pennies, locally produced textiles can't compete. The dependency grows while the pollution deepens.

## Factories With No Oversight

On top of the waste, many Global South nations host textile and garment factories for fast fashion brands, attracted by low wages and weak environmental laws. These factories often discharge untreated chemical dye wastewater directly into rivers, leaving entire communities dependent on poisoned water sources. In Bangladesh, India, and parts of Southeast Asia, rivers literally run blue, red, or green depending on the dye of the day. Regulation is minimal, enforcement weaker still. The profits stay with international corporations, while the pollution stays local.

The reality is clear: fast fashion's environmental costs are outsourced. Wealthy countries enjoy cheap, disposable clothing, while dumping countries choke on waste and pollution they never asked for. It's environmental injustice in its rawest form—communities with the least power bear the heaviest burdens.

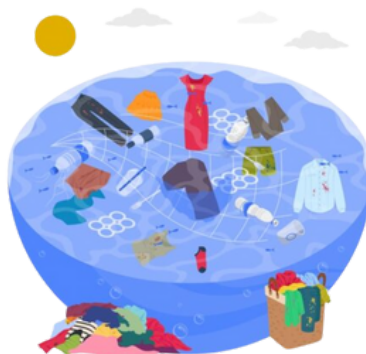
Over **11.3 megatons** of textile waste ends up in the landfills every year since 2017



People with higher income generate **76%** more clothing waste



**35%** of all microplastics in the ocean come from the laundering of synthetic textiles



Source: Uniform Market



# Case Study: Bangladesh

by Pavla Faltová

**Bangladesh is the world's second-largest garment exporter, supplying clothing for nearly every major fast fashion brand. The country's economy is deeply tied to this industry, with textiles accounting for about 80% of total exports. But behind the low prices and endless supply of cheap clothing lies an environmental and human disaster zone. Bangladesh has become a frontline victim of fast fashion's pollution, waste, and lack of accountability.**

## Toxic Rivers

The textile and dyeing factories clustered around Dhaka, Gazipur, and Narayanganj have turned once-lifegiving rivers into chemical dumps. The Buriganga River, which flows through Dhaka, is now one of the most polluted waterways in the world.

Factories discharge untreated wastewater full of dyes, heavy metals, and other toxic chemicals directly into the river. The water is so contaminated that aquatic life has nearly vanished, and local communities can no longer rely on it for drinking, bathing, or irrigation.

Seasonal floods, already intensified by climate change, spread this toxic water across fields and villages, seeping into crops and groundwater. The legacy of fashion here isn't style—it's poisoned soil and destroyed ecosystems.

The process of dyeing textiles is one of the dirtiest stages of production.

In Bangladesh, it's common for wastewater to be released untreated because regulation is either too weak or openly ignored.

Rivers like the Turag, Shitalakhya, and Dhaleshwari literally change color by the day, reflecting whichever dyes are being used in nearby factories.

This rainbow-colored pollution comes at a high human cost: skin diseases, respiratory problems, and waterborne illnesses are rampant in communities along these rivers.



Source: The Wikipedia

## Waste Overflow



Source: Zaman Myhammad Fahad Faisal



Source: Dhaka Tribune



Source: Reuters



Source: The Daily Star

Bangladesh doesn't just produce new clothes—it also receives textile waste. Leftover scraps, rejected batches, and unsellable second-hand imports pile up in landfills or are openly burned.

Burning synthetic fabrics like polyester releases toxic fumes, worsening air quality in already congested cities. With limited waste management infrastructure, these dumps are ticking environmental time bombs.

The environmental toll directly intersects with human exploitation. Factory workers—most of them women—labor in unsafe conditions, often without protective gear against chemicals.

When rivers and soils are poisoned, it's the same workers and their families who drink the water and eat food grown in contaminated fields. The global fashion supply chain saves costs; Bangladesh pays with health and lives.

Bangladesh has become the sacrifice zone of global fashion—a country whose rivers, air, and communities are poisoned so consumers elsewhere can buy a T-shirt for five euros.

Until fast fashion brands are forced to internalize the costs of their production, Bangladesh will continue to pay the hidden bill for cheap clothing.



# But fashion was always a thing, right? So what changed?

by Pavla Faltová

**Fashion once moved with the rhythm of seasons. Designers released collections twice a year, retailers rolled them out slowly, and trends lived for months, even years. That calendar is dead. In its place has risen a new system shaped not by catwalks but by social media feeds — a cycle where microtrends erupt overnight and vanish almost as quickly. This is the TikTokization of fashion: the acceleration of style into viral content, where clothes are consumed like memes and discarded just as fast.**

## Fashion as Content, Not Craft

On TikTok, fashion isn't about craftsmanship or personal style; it's about generating clicks. A sound goes viral, a hashtag explodes, and suddenly millions of people are showing off the same look — cargo skirts, balletcore, coquette bows, you name it. A week later, the algorithm has moved on. What's left behind is a pile of barely-worn clothes, relics of yesterday's microtrend. This shift treats garments not as objects with value but as disposable content props, no different from filters or trending sounds.

Microtrends are trends with a shelf life shorter than a carton of milk. They flare up thanks to influencers and haul culture: one person posts a video featuring a new "aesthetic," and within days entire feeds are flooded with it.

"Clean girl," "blokette," "mermaidcore" — dozens of aesthetics now cycle through each year. Where once a trend lasted a season, now it may survive only two to three weeks.



Source: NUS CNM Society

## Disposable by Design

There are clothing companies that went from obscurity to global dominance in just a few years. They don't own retail stores. Don't play by traditional fashion calendars. Instead, they upload up to 10,000 new products every single day, selling them at prices so low they seem impossible.

Influencers showcase massive "hauls" of these brands clothing on TikTok, while their apps dominates download charts across the world.

But behind the hype is one of the most destructive business models in modern history. These unnamed ultra-fast fashion giants has turned the planet into its dumping ground.

One specific brand produces mainly in southern China, through a web of subcontractors. Journalists have documented factory workers sewing clothes for 16–18 hours a day, with only one day off a month, for less than \$500.

Wastewater from dyeing facilities often flows untreated into nearby rivers, staining them blue, red, or green depending on the chemical load of the day.

Independent testing has found children's clothes from this company containing hazardous levels of lead and phthalates far beyond EU safety standards. Some items were so contaminated that they'd be considered unsafe for handling, let alone wearing.

This brand's logistics rely heavily on air freight to deliver small parcels directly to consumers, avoiding import duties and cutting shipping times. But air shipping produces dozens of times more emissions than sea freight, making the carbon footprint of each package a quiet climate bomb.

### The Future of Fashion?

**The TikTokization of fashion raises a stark question: what happens when style no longer has time to breathe? When trends exist only as viral moments, fashion ceases to be culture and becomes disposable media. The winners are algorithms, logistics networks, and corporations that profit from the churn. The losers are ecosystems, workers, and anyone hoping for clothing to mean more than a quick hit of dopamine.**



# Algerian Traditional Dress: From Heritage to Modern Fashion

by Milisa Lekbir

When I think about Algerian traditional dress, I feel an immediate connection to the rich cultural heritage and diverse history of my country. Algeria is a land of contrasts—from the Mediterranean coastline to the towering Kabylia mountains and the vast Saharan plains—and this diversity is beautifully reflected in our clothing. Each region has developed its own traditional garments, which not only served practical purposes but also expressed identity, social status, and artistic creativity. What fascinates me most is how these garments have evolved over centuries, blending age-old craftsmanship with modern trends, allowing us to wear pieces of our heritage while still feeling contemporary and stylish. Every time I see someone dressed in traditional attire, I am reminded that these garments are living symbols of our culture, and that through fashion, we can keep history alive while embracing modernity.



Algerian Traditional Clothes - Attention Deal Brand

# Kabyle dress

The Kabyle dress is one of the most striking examples of Algeria's sartorial heritage. Coming from the mountainous northern region of Kabylia, these dresses have historically been a statement of both identity and social status. The Thakchita and Jabador are traditionally made of heavy, brightly colored fabrics and adorned with intricate geometric embroidery. Each pattern has meaning—signifying family, community, or local heritage—and the embroidery is complemented by elaborate silver jewelry, including necklaces, bracelets, and headdresses, which historically indicated wealth and social standing. Over time, Kabyle clothing has adapted to modern life. Today, lighter fabrics, practical cuts, and stylized accessories make these garments wearable for everyday occasions, yet designers continue to preserve the signature embroidery and silver adornments that make Kabyle dress instantly recognizable. I love seeing how modern interpretations—like scarves, handbags, or contemporary gowns—carry the spirit of Kabylia into today's fashion world. It is a reminder that our cultural heritage does not have to remain in the past; it can evolve and remain vibrant.



Photo from Pintrest of Kbyle dress





# Chawi dress

Moving eastward, the Chawi people of the Aurès region have created some of Algeria's most flowing and colorful traditional garments. Chawi women's robes are characterized by hand-stitched embroidery, vibrant natural dyes, and flowing designs that express grace and cultural identity. Traditionally, the fabrics were handwoven and dyed using natural materials, creating vivid reds, yellows, and blues that seemed to tell stories with every fold. These garments were often worn with embroidered belts and distinctive jewelry, and each outfit could represent personal or family identity. Today, Chawi-inspired clothing continues to influence Algerian fashion designers, who incorporate traditional embroidery into modern dresses, scarves, and evening gowns. The elegance of Chawi robes remains intact, even when adapted for contemporary aesthetics, demonstrating how tradition and innovation can coexist. I find it inspiring that these garments, once strictly ceremonial or regional, are now celebrated as fashion statements, giving young Algerians a way to honor their heritage while engaging with global fashion trends.



**Photo from Pintrest of Classic and Modern Chawi dress**

## Karako dress

Another traditional Algerian style that captures my attention is Karako, a versatile garment worn across several regions by both men and women. Historically, Karako was valued for its combination of practicality and elegance, often made from durable fabrics with subtle embroidery around the neckline and sleeves. Its simplicity made it suitable for daily life, yet the details and craftsmanship conveyed refinement. In modern fashion, Karako has been reimagined in urban contexts, inspiring jackets, shirts, and casual wear that incorporate traditional embroidery with contemporary cuts and fabrics. Similarly, Khit Roh dresses—known for their exceptional stitch-based designs—were traditionally worn for weddings, festivals, and special ceremonies. The hand-stitched patterns are intricate, reflecting generations of expertise and patience. Today, designers use Khit Roh techniques to create modern dresses, jackets, and accessories, allowing these ancient techniques to live on in modern wardrobes. For me, seeing these traditional elements integrated into contemporary fashion feels like a bridge between the past and present, showing that Algerian culture is both timeless and adaptable.

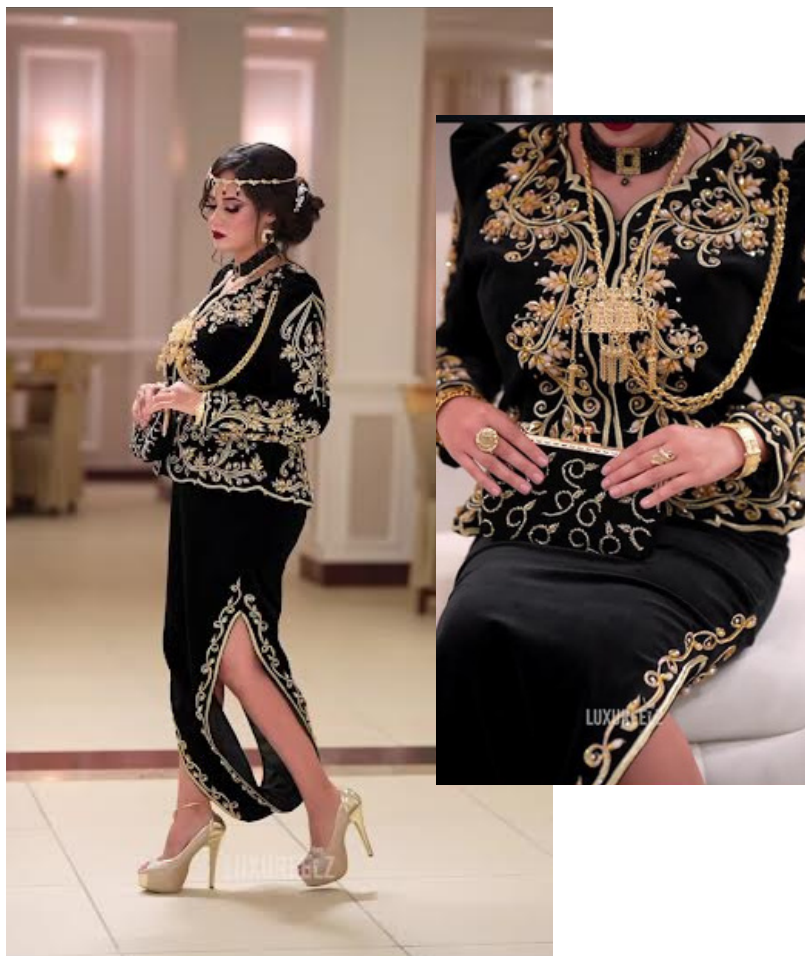


Photo from Pintrest of Karako dress

# Koftan dress

One of the most iconic garments in Algeria is the Koftan, a timeless piece that reflects both luxury and elegance. Worn for centuries, especially during weddings, religious celebrations, and important ceremonies, the Algerian Koftan is crafted from rich fabrics such as velvet, satin, or silk and decorated with delicate embroidery using gold or silver threads, a technique known as mahdjouba or fetla. Traditionally, Koftans were handmade by skilled artisans, taking weeks or even months to complete, which is why they have always been considered a symbol of prestige and refinement. Women often accessorize them with ornate belts (hizam), pearl or gold jewelry, and embroidered veils, transforming the outfit into a true expression of elegance. What makes the Koftan particularly fascinating is not just its beauty, but also its cultural significance. It represents continuity, as it has been passed down from mothers to daughters, becoming a treasured family heirloom that carries memories of past generations. It is also incredibly versatile, with each Algerian region giving the Koftan its own touch—whether through embroidery motifs, choice of fabric, or color palette. In Algiers, for example, Koftans often feature intricate golden threadwork that reflects Ottoman influences, while in Tlemcen, silk and velvet dominate, combined with Andalusian-inspired designs. This regional diversity makes the Koftan a living canvas of Algeria's rich history and cultural exchange.

Photo from Pintrest of modern Koftan



Kurdish man wearing a kaftan. Illustration by Max Karl Tilke published in *Oriental Costumes: Their Designs and Colors* (1922), Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi.



A fun fact is that our neighbors in Morocco also claim the Koftan as their own, which often sparks lively debates on social media. Every time a celebrity or designer showcases a Koftan, Algerians and Moroccans flood the comments, each side defending its heritage with passion. While Moroccans insist that the Koftan is Moroccan, Algerians proudly point out that the garment has been part of Algerian tradition for centuries and is even officially recognized by UNESCO as part of Algeria's intangible cultural heritage. These playful but heated debates show just how powerful clothing can be as a marker of identity and pride. Personally, I find it amusing that the Koftan can ignite such passionate discussions—it proves how deeply it is rooted in our cultures and how much it means to us as Algerians.

Today, modern designers are reimagining the Koftan by blending traditional embroidery and luxurious fabrics with contemporary cuts, creating gowns that appeal to both Algerian brides and international fashion enthusiasts. Fashion shows across Europe and the Middle East now feature Algerian Koftans, allowing the world to appreciate the artistry behind them. This global recognition not only highlights Algeria's cultural richness but also ensures that the Koftan continues to evolve, adapting to new trends while never losing its essence. For me, the Koftan is more than just a dress—it is a powerful cultural ambassador, embodying elegance, tradition, and the enduring pride of Algerian identity.



What strikes me most about Algerian traditional dress is its ongoing evolution. Urbanization, globalization, and modern fashion trends have influenced how people wear these garments, but the essence of each style remains intact. Designers creatively mix traditional fabrics, embroidery, and motifs with modern cuts, colors, and fabrics, producing clothing that is both practical and culturally meaningful. Social media and fashion shows have also played a huge role in popularizing traditional styles among younger generations, encouraging them to embrace their heritage with pride. Today, Kabyle, Chawi, Krako, and Khit Roh-inspired garments appear not only in weddings or cultural celebrations but also in everyday fashion, blending cultural symbolism with contemporary elegance. I feel a sense of pride when I see young Algerians wearing these styles, knowing that our traditions continue to inspire creativity and expression.

Algerian traditional dress is not just about clothing—it is a living, breathing reflection of our history, creativity, and identity. Each region contributes its own colors, patterns, and techniques, and over time these have evolved without losing their symbolic meaning. Whether it is the geometric embroidery of Kabyle garments, the flowing elegance of Chawi robes, the practical yet refined Krako, or the intricate stitching of Khit Roh, each style carries a story that connects us to our ancestors and preserves our cultural identity. Today, I am amazed and inspired by the way designers honor these traditions while reimagining them for modern life. Traditional Algerian dress continues to be celebrated, shared, and worn proudly, proving that fashion can be a powerful medium for cultural preservation and innovation. Through clothing, we can honor the past, express the present, and inspire the future—all while celebrating the vibrant beauty of Algerian heritage.



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