

Striving for slavery-free fashion

I see you: each individual amongst the millions in slavery so I can improve the way I look



Anagha: "The security men in the factory stopped my parents and brothers from visiting me. When I refused to do overtime, I got shouted at. It was worse than prison."



Deepika: "It felt like a jail in the factory premises. The food was really bad quality and I couldn't see my family or friends."



Vanani: "I had to work even when I had fever."

YOUR STORY: Radhamma

The terrible conditions of the spinning mills in South India drove Radhamma to suicide. These same mills supply some of the big name clothing brands which we have in our wardrobes. Recruiters are sent to the poorest areas of India to convince parents, with lie about a well-paid job, comfortable housing, good food and schooling, to send their daughters into slavery. The girls have to work non-stop for eight hours, collecting the thread

bundles from the machine and replacing the empty ones, and sweeping the floor. If they slack at all, then they are beaten. The working conditions are so harsh and the hours are so long that on March 9th 2014 Radhamma was admitted into hospital. She died a few

hours later having committed suicide by consuming nail polish. (SOMO Flawed Fabric report)

Arjun, another child weaver in India says this: "Most days we were only given one break for eating and one break for toilet. If we tried to sleep, they would beat us. Sometimes they gave us pills so we can work all night. I felt so tired I cut myself often. If the blood from my fingers came on the carpet, they would take green chili and rub it on my wound for punishment."



Some more facts...

- Top UK high street brands are selling clothes made by women in slavery.
- These women are enslaved all around the world, especially in countries like India but also in the UK.
- In Bangladesh, around 18.5% of working children aged 5-14 are working in the fashion industry. Their childhoods are cut short and they never have the chance to go to school. Girls as young as 13 are working 11 hours a day in the most appalling conditions, physically and verbally abused.
- Many contract illnesses such as TB due to these conditions



I PLEDGE TO CHANGE MY SHOPPING BECAUSE YOUR STORY MATTERS

An anonymous senior executive from a big high street clothing company recently told the Guardian that shoppers 'don't care' about conditions, and research shows most 'prefer inexpensive products to respecting for human rights'. **FOR THINGS TO CHANGE, WE NEED TO SHOW THAT WE DO CARE.**

My life...

- Buy from ethical shops: (mainly online) there is information about the best at ethicalconsumer.com, including People Tree Organic Cotton Clothing, Annie Greenabelle, ASOS's green room, Komodo Clothing, Sea Salt and Braintree clothing, and Indigo (a shop in Cowley).
- Search through charity shops: a good alternative as the former can be pricey (although the clothes are often of better quality and last longer!), or use ebay and Oxfam online.
- Research high street shops: none have eradicated labour from their supply chain, but some are better than others. Ethicalconsumer.com ranks them out of 20 (using factors such as such as human rights and environmental sustainability). Lines such as H&M conscientious score highest, though none over 10/20. Emailing favourite shops to ask about their supply chains finds out information as well as registering that consumers care. Also, since the Modern Slavery Act, businesses with a turn over of £36 million or over have to prepare a statement each year to explain the steps they are taking to eradicate slavery in their supply chains. These must be available on their website.
- Clothes swap with friends, or repair/ alter/ design clothes so that they last longer

Your life...

Magdalene and her family were rescued from slavery here in the UK. She and her children were kept under lock and key, and delivered every day to a factory to work 12 hour shifts. Her trafficker took all her wages. She went without food, in an attempt to save her children from starving, yet there was still not enough and all became dangerously underweight. Her children were forced to stand and watch the traffickers as they enjoyed their food, given only the scraps

A fantastic career opportunity! Vi signed a contract with a company that promised to take her from Vietnam to a good job in the USA. Instead, she was trafficked to American Samoa (a group of islands in the South Pacific). Her passport was confiscated so she couldn't escape. She worked from 7am until 2am, 19 hours a day, seven days a week, for no pay. She was only given a few cabbage leaves and potatoes to eat each day. The factory rooms had no ventilation and Vi was not allowed outside for fresh air. 36 people were squeezed into one room. When some workers went on strike asking for pay, the factory owner threatened to short-circuit electric cables to cause a fire to kill all of them.

Some helpful resources:

- 'The Truth Behind the Barcode' ranks 300 fashion brands based on their efforts to address child and forced labour in their supply chains.
- Fair Wear Foundation works with companies and factories to improve labour conditions, monitoring at factory-level and interviewing workers off-site. Their logo assures that 90% of the company's suppliers are under monitoring and making efforts to eradicate slavery from their supply chain). Focused on Australia, but still useful.
- Free2work: grades companies based on child and forced labour in the supply chain.
- Good Guide: grades are more general (based on health, environmental and social impact). An app scans the barcode on products to immediately see their rating
- Ethical consumer and Fashion revolution have released a 'Fashion transparency Index' following research into company supply chains
- aVOID : a downloadable plugin for the Internet with alerts when products are associated with child labour, including on Amazon.