



Vegan Wear

Plant fibre-based apparel is not just about making a statement but also has a unique twist to making green clothing a reality. **Bindu Gopal Rao** finds out which fibre is the easiest and least polluting to produce...

Cotton, Aloe Vera, Bamboo, Eucalyptus, Banana, Orange, etc... If you are wondering what these plant names are doing here, well, it is fibres from these plants that are being made into the apparel of the future! Yes, you read that right!

NEW VISTAS

Kosha, an eco-conscious winter wear brand, made in India, means layer or sheath in Sanskrit. Kosha's collection is suitable for everyday wear for all weathers. It is 100 per cent organic and also includes sweatshirts, clothing for travellers, and joggers. Made for those who need multifunctional clothing and a minimal aesthetic, Kosha's clothes can be worn to the lounge, for a workout, for travelling or simply grocery runs. The range is not only eco-conscious, but also durable and stylish.

Samatvam By Anjali Bhaskar's collection PURE, was launched during the coronavirus pandemic this year and was conceived during the initial stages of the lockdown. The execution and production were completed when the lockdown began to ease in phases. "At Samatvam we evaluate what kind of legacy we want to leave behind for our coming generations. The pandemic, has really showed us what matters in our life. This concept of sustainability extends towards my brand as well. This is what has urged me to create

a line of clothing from plant-based fibres. Plants such as Eucalyptus, Banana, Orange and Aloe Vera, are infamous for beauty treatments and ailments. But what we do not know is that, Eucalyptus is also known to relieve stress by imbuing relaxation. Fabrics made from oranges help the skin absorb essential Vitamin C and are soft and silky. Fabric made from the skin of bananas and the fruit itself too are soft and silky to the touch. Aloe Vera, traditionally known to have soothing properties, helps beat humidity and heat as well. All these fabrics are eco-friendly and biodegradable too,” says Anjali Bhaskar, Founder and Creative Head, Samatvam By Anjali Bhaskar.

MIXED USE

Kosha’s range of products can be used in several occasions and are packed with features. Their hoodies for instance is good for urban activewear. “It is named after Rimo Muztagh, one of the most remote sub-ranges of the Karakoram Range with an elevation of 7516 meters. The southern part of Rimo Muztagh is in Ladakh,” says Fazal Mahmood, Product Lead at Kosha. The Jogger, is a core style for every traveller’s wardrobe while the Supima Cotton Pullover is inspired by the

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beautiful weather of the lush Doon Valley situated within the Sivalik Hills in the Lesser Himalayas making them the perfect addition to your wardrobe.

BEING MATERIAL

Kosha’s innovative Bamboo and Merino Wool Base layers are made of the finest quality of durable fibres. “The silhouettes for the ‘PURE’ collection include designs of whimsical butterflies, blooming and blossoming tulips, and are generously smattered with earthy and pastel hues. The details lie in their exquisite subtlety and delicate French Knots that are embroidered into the outfits to offer a textured pattern. The collection palette mainly include pastel and earthy hues in matching co-ord



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FEATURE

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sets. All our silhouettes are fluid in nature too. We have ensured that these outfits can be worn not only in the comfort of your home, but can also be adorned while running errands, mini stay-cations or just lazing around on the beach,” says Bhaskar. Bamboo, another plant-based fibre, seems to be the upcoming trend and a favourite with a lot of brands and designers too. “This fibre absorbs more moisture and helps in the evaporation of human sweat. It also absorbs dye better and faster thus making the results much quicker. Any outfit can be produced with 100 per cent



Bamboo Pulp. But most important of all is that it is eco-friendly and biodegradable,” explains Bhaskar.

ODE TO ORGANIC

Plant-based clothing is organic and free from harsh chemicals and fertilisers. Being naturally ‘odour and microbes resistant,’ it prevents microbial growth accelerated by sweating/ perspiration. The use of undyed/ natural colours to the fabric is also an added characteristic to the apparel design. “Organic farming of plant-based fibres is expensive given the yield which is significantly lower for a given amount of land when compared to regular cotton grown with the aid of fertilisers and pesticides. The industrial process to manufacture plant-based and regenerated fabric also makes them go through an intoxicating chemical process. Therefore, the resultant fabric eventually does not retain much of the goodness we advertise. New-age fibres made from orange peel, pineapple leaves and eucalyptus trees are sustainable only in theory. None of these grow naturally in abundance to be adopted as a fibre on a larger scale. If we must industrialise their cultivation and cover them with petrochemicals to achieve the required finish, then why not stick to good old cotton and linen,” opines Mahmood.

FEATURE

EVERY FABRIC OR MATERIAL HAS ITS OWN CHALLENGES, SO DO NATURAL FIBRES. THESE FIBRES ARE NOT MANUFACTURED IN LARGE QUANTITIES UNLIKE COTTON, SILK, CREPE AS THESE ARE MORE EXPENSIVE

CHALLENGE FACTOR

The challenge with plant-based apparel is with the idea of industrialisation. If one starts manufacturing tons of organic cotton, it is going to have a negative impact on the planet in the name of ethical clothing. "For example, Bamboo can be made into fabric without the heavy use of toxic chemicals but only in small capacities. The resultant fabric would not be as fine when compared to the bamboo fabric made via the viscose process of regeneration. But the viscose process is an industrialised methodology that involves heavy use of chemicals which cannot be avoided since the aim is to fast track production and achieve a fluid finish in the final fabric,"

informs Mahmood. Every fabric or material comes with its own challenges, so do natural fibres. Firstly, these fibres are not manufactured in large quantities unlike cotton, silk, crepe as these are more expensive. One will also need to find a supplier to ethically produce this yarn. Another factor to keep in mind is the quality and characteristic of the fabric that is attained when two different fibres are woven together. "Once obtained you need to understand how the prints, embroidery and style will suit the fabric. Intricate embroidery is avoided, as the material is extremely fine and soft. Another factor that imposes a challenge is dyeing. Since these are all natural fibres, they usually come in earthy and pastel shades and dyeing them in another shade, might pose a challenge, because we do not know how the fabric will react to the dye. Most important of all is to justify the price of such a garment to the customer," concludes Bhaskar. Therefore, if you are planning to make a difference and switch to ethical clothing, remember that plant-based fibers are good for you and good for the environment though it may take a few more decades before they become reasonably priced and all the kinks are ironed out. ■

