

Tasva	28.07.2024	Sunday Times	National	India's Oly Uniforms create a buzz for the wrong reasons
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India's Oly uniforms create a buzz for the wrong reasons

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Bigger isn't always better—the cliché was proved right during the Olympics opening ceremony. In Paris, the world's fashion capital, it was Team Mongolia's Seine-sensational gold-embroidered ensemble that scored big.

Haiti (super arty), Czechia (splattered trench coats) and Sri Lanka (white silk) wowed too even though the US (Ralph Lauren) and Italy (Emporio Armani) pulled out the big guns.

As for India, let's say if there was a medal for the best ceremonial uniform, we wouldn't even be close. Though India's ikat-inspired kurta-bundi and sarees were designed by no less than Tarun Tahiliani, many thought it was a missed opportunity to celebrate Indian craftsmanship.

While it's rare to see a polarized social media agree on something, this time the criticism was almost unanimous.

"Today, the Indian fashion industry is talked about for its traditional yet modern clothing. This was an opportunity to make something unique and creative," says Delhi-based fashion designer Shilpi Gupta.

This was also the first time a designer had been roped in to design the official ceremonial attire for Team India.

Fashion commentator Shefalee Vasudev says the debate shouldn't be about print vs handwoven as Tasva, a collaboration between Tahiliani and Aditya Birla Group, was contracted to design the contingent uniforms. "Tasva is into quality mill-made fabric. It's not a handloom brand. If someone had wanted a hand-

loom imprint, the contract would have been given to those known for their handloom signature," says Vasudev. But she adds that even within the mandate, the aesthetics did not come together.

Responding to the comments, Ashish Mukul, brand head of Tasva, told TOI that the ceremonial attire for Team India was crafted with a sense of national pride and an aim to balance tradition with modernity. "Our intention is to create an attire that represents India's rich heritage and ensure our athletes feel comfortable and confident," Mukul said, adding that the fabrics, including cotton and viscose crepe, were selected for their practical and aesthetic qualities.

Nutritionist Nandita Iyer, who does not consider herself a fashion expert, says she was left dissatisfied as a connoisseur of



India's flag bearers Sindhu and Sharath Kamal on Friday

Indian textiles, crafts and handlooms. "Any such global event is a stage for us to proudly show-

case our heritage and history and doing it with viscose fabric and ikat print tackily stitched as a border seems like hasty work," says Iyer.

However, others pointed out the challenges of creating uniforms that balance aesthetics, functionality, and cultural representation. In a post on Instagram, Susan Thomas, ex-director of NIFT Bengaluru, pointed out that viscose is used for uniforms as "Olympics is a performance-driven event that hinges on fitness."

Designer Rina Dhaka pointed out that there are budgets and briefs to fill. "When we do productions on this scale, digital is used over weaves to give consistency and quality," says Dhaka. For her, badminton player PV Sindhu's beautiful smile lifted the ensemble.