

Tasva	16.07.2024	Lifestyle Asia India	National	Tarun Tahiliani on designing the ceremonial dress for the Paris Olympics 2024
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International designers such as Christian Louboutin, Armani, and Ralph Lauren have all created Olympic Uniforms in the past. In an India-proud move, Indian couturier Tarun Tahiliani takes on the prestigious task of designing the ceremonial dress for Team India at the upcoming Paris Olympics 2024 under Aditya Birla Group's menswear label, Tasva.

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The Official Ceremonial Dress for Team India was unveiled last week and consists of a kurta Bundi set for male athletes, a look very similar to Tahiliani's signature look. Meanwhile, the female athletes will don an elegant sari with ikat-inspired digitally printed panels in saffron and green, and blue buttonholes representing the Ashoka Chakra, with an ivory base which represents peace and unity. Paired with trainers (yes the quintessential sari and sneaker combo) adorned with traditional Benares brocade make it a look that's sure to stand out in Paris. We speak to Tasva's Chief Design Officer, Tarun Tahiliani, about telling a story about India and its craft prowess.

Firstly congratulations, how does it feel to be the first Indian designer to design the official ceremonial attire for Team India for the Paris Olympics 2024? Ever wondered why they didn't rope anyone earlier?

Thank you so much! It's an immense honour and a moment of great pride to be the first Indian designer to create the official ceremonial attire for Team India at the Paris Olympics 2024. As for why no one was roped in earlier, I believe the timing is everything. The growing recognition of Indian culture and fashion across the globe might have created the perfect moment for this collaboration. It's a testament to how far Indian fashion has come and how much potential it holds for representing our national identity with elegance and pride.

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What was the inspiration behind the outfits? Was there a mandate for incorporating certain colours or elements?

The inspiration behind the Olympic outfits was to beautifully blend India's rich cultural heritage with modern design, reflecting the essence of 'India Modern.' While there wasn't a strict mandate, I believed that incorporating the tricolour palette was essential to represent our national identity. We also chose ikat-inspired prints, a technique that resonates across various Indian regions, to infuse the outfits with traditional craftsmanship.

Our vision was to create a garment that is visually stunning while ensuring they are comfortable and functional for the athletes. This led to innovations such as the pre-pleated saree for convenience and contemporary features like panel detailing, safari pockets, and rolled-up sleeves for the kurta Bundi set. These elements come together to create a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity, perfectly suited for representing India at the Paris Olympics.

What aspect of India's craft traditions do you wish to highlight with the outfits?

With these Olympic outfits, we aim to highlight the rich and diverse craft traditions of India, particularly focusing on the intricate and timeless art of ikat weaving. Ikat is a traditional dyeing technique prevalent across various regions in India, each bringing its unique flavour and interpretation to the craft. By incorporating ikat-inspired prints into the designs, we celebrate this universal yet regionally distinctive technique that symbolises our unity in diversity.

One of the unique aspects of these outfits is the inclusion of brocade sneakers. By integrating traditional brocade patterns into modern footwear, we blend the old with the new, creating a striking balance between heritage and contemporary style. These sneakers not only add a distinctive touch to the ensemble but also highlight the versatility and innovation within Indian craftsmanship.

The Bundi which is often your signature look is now a part of the Olympics attire. Tell us about your journey with the silhouette.

The Bundi has always been a significant part of my design repertoire, representing a perfect blend of tradition and modernity. My journey with this silhouette began with a deep appreciation for its historical roots and its versatile nature. The Bundi, traditionally worn across all classes of Indian society, is emblematic of our cultural diversity and unity.

Over the years, I've experimented with various iterations of the Bundi, incorporating modern elements to it. For the ceremonial dress we have used cotton fabric, added functional details like safari pockets, and updated the silhouette with panel detailing and rolled-up sleeves. Each modification was made to enhance its practicality while retaining its classic charm. The journey of the Bundi from traditional wear to a symbol of modern Indian fashion at the Olympics reflects my design philosophy — honouring our rich heritage while embracing contemporary aesthetics.

What makes Tasva the correct medium to relay the story of India to the world?

Tasva captures the essence of 'India Modern,' making it the perfect medium to share India's story with the world. Our brand is rooted in the rich cultural heritage of India, yet it embraces contemporary design sensibilities, creating a unique blend that resonates on a global stage. Tasva's commitment to quality and craftsmanship ensures that each garment tells a story of tradition through diverse textiles, meticulous handwork, and the use of luxurious, locally sourced fabrics. Furthermore, Tasva is dedicated to innovation and functionality. Our designs are not just visually stunning but also practical and comfortable, meeting the needs of the modern wearer. This balance of aesthetic appeal and functionality makes our garments perfect for representing India at prestigious events like the Olympics.