Tasva	23.07.2024	Man's World	National	Tasva's ceremonial attire for Team India at Paris Olympics 2024 is a stylish fusion

The recently concluded euros, wimbledon and copa america tournaments that blitzed with goals and athletic excellence reiterated how fashion has made seamless inroads into the world of sports. Be it Janik Sinner's subtle Gucci plugs or Adidas stealing the show at football tournaments with their retro kits and pre-match bomber jackets, it made complete sense for fashion to piggyback on sports with viewers from across the globe glued to their TV screens. And that will be the case again when the 2024 Olympics commence at the fashion capital of the world, Paris.

Tasva, the men's Indian wear brand by Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd. and celebrated designer Tarun Tahiliani are ensuring that Indian athletes look the part when they take the centre stage at the Paris Olympics 2024. The ceremonial dress for Team India showcases an innovative blend of heritage and modernity, emblematic of the brand's ethos and the visionary design of Tarun Tahiliani.

Drawing inspiration from India's rich cultural tapestry, the ceremonial outfits feature a tricolour palette of saffron, green, and white. "We're honoured to dress Team India," said Tahiliani. "Ultimately, it was about creating a piece that would make every Indian proud and resonate with the spirit of our athletes as they step onto the global stage." This sentiment mirrors the evolving narrative of men's fashion, with historical and cultural motifs that speak to both heritage and contemporary sensibilities.

Male athletes will wear a kurta bundi set, while female athletes will don elegant sarees with ikat-inspired prints and modern trainers adorned with Benares brocade, seamlessly merging tradition with contemporary style. "This attire not only honors our rich cultural heritage but also represents a forward-thinking, dynamic India ready to shine on the global stage," Tahiliani added. This approach aligns with recent trends in ceremonial attire at international events, where the focus is on comfort, symbolism, and modern aesthetics.

"At the Olympics, athletes are not just competitors; they are ambassadors of their country. The ceremonial attire they wear becomes a symbol of national pride and cultural heritage," said Tahiliani. In this interview, he delves into the design process and the inspiration behind the collection.

What inspired you to create the ceremonial dress for Team India at the Paris Olympics?
The inspiration to create the ceremonial dress for Team India at the Paris Olympics stemmed from a deep sense of national pride and the unique opportunity to showcase India's rich cultural heritage on a global platform. I wanted the attire to reflect the spirit of 'India Modern'. The challenge of designing something that honors our heritage while showcasing the progressive spirit of India, drove me to innovate and push the boundaries of traditional Indian attire.

How did you incorporate elements of Indian culture and heritage into the ceremonial dress?
We drew inspiration from the rich tapestry of Indian traditions and craftsmanship. We took the classic kurta bundi silhouette and added contemporary features such as panel detailing, safari pockets, and rolled-up sleeves, adding a touch of modern practicality and style. We have used ikat-inspired prints, a technique that is prevalent across all Indian regions, with each artisan deriving unique variations. Ikat is universal to India, making it a fitting choice for the ceremonial dress.
The saree, a timeless piece of Indian clothing, was designed with a pre-pleated feature for convenience, and the blouse is crafted from cotton satin lycra to ensure comfort and ease of movement. The final touch was the sneakers. Marrying traditional brocade with modern footwear adds a unique charm to the ensemble.

What was the experience like working with the Indian Olympic Association on this project?
It was an incredibly rewarding and collaborative experience. From the outset, there was a shared vision of creating a ceremonial dress that represents the Indian culture and heritage on a global stage. The association's invaluable insights into the practical needs and preferences of the athletes guided our design process. Their support and openness to innovative ideas allowed us to create something that embodies national pride, cultural heritage and the dynamic spirit of modern India.

Could you elaborate on the innovative techniques and materials used in the ceremonial dress?
For the men's attire, contemporary features such as panel detailing, safari pockets, and rolled-up sleeves enhance the style and add practicality, making the garments versatile and suitable for the athletes' needs. The saree for the women athletes incorporates a pre-pleated design, a significant innovation for convenience and ease of wear.

The choice of materials was equally important. Cotton, a fabric integral to our heritage, was used for the kurta bundi set. It is lightweight, breathable, and comfortable, making it ideal for the Parisian summer. For the saree, we utilized viscose crepe, prized for its natural drape and breathability. The blouse is crafted from cotton satin lycra, combining the breathability of cotton with the smooth finish of satin and the flexibility of lycra.

Can you explain the symbolism behind specific design elements like the tricolour palette and Ashoka Chakra-inspired details?
Each design element of this ceremonial dress tells the story of India. The incorporation of the tricolor was especially significant. We have innovatively used ikat inspired printed panels in saffron and green. The subtle hint of blue in the buttonholes represents the Ashoka Chakra, and the ivory stands for peace and unity.

What challenges did you face while designing the ceremonial dress, and how did you overcome them?
One of the primary challenges was achieving the perfect balance between tradition and modernity. Convincing the association to use the tricolor for the ceremonial dress was particularly significant, as India had not used the tricolor in this context before. It was important to illustrate how the tricolor could effectively symbolize our national pride and unity.

With the opening ceremony being held in Paris, ensuring the garments were comfortable and lightweight for the summer posed another significant challenge. So, we used natural fabrics like cotton and viscose crepe that are comfortable and breathable. Additionally, designing for a diverse group of athletes, each with unique needs and preferences, added another layer of complexity.

How do you see fashion playing a role in expressing national identity on global platforms like the Olympics?

Fashion serves as a visual representation of a country's heritage, values, and culture. Through thoughtful design and the use of traditional elements, fashion can communicate a powerful message of unity and pride. On a global stage like the Olympics, where the eyes of the world are watching, fashion becomes a powerful medium to express who we are and what we stand for as a nation.

Are there any upcoming projects or collaborations that you are excited about?

We will be soon launching our brocade sneakers for Tasva. We are taking a long-term view for women's wear for Tasva and have been doing some research. But, we are still fine tuning the product offering at Tasva men's before we take that leap. Until then we are focusing on accessories, beautiful jewellery, shawls and a great selection of footwear for Tasva men.