

Tasva	06.07.2024	The Hindu (Page – 01)	Chennai, Coimbatore	Tasva's Ceremonial Dress for Team India at the Paris Olympics Unveiled by the Hon'ble Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Dr Mansukh Mandaviya
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Team India's sportsmen will don a *kurta bundi* set, while the sportswomen will be dressed in matching saris that reflect the tri-colour flag at the opening ceremony of the upcoming Paris Olympics 2024 on July 26.

The outfits, designed by the king of drapes, Tarun Tahiliani, feature ikat-inspired prints, Benaras brocade, and marry craftsmanship with brand Tasva's (Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail's ready-to-wear label menswear) India Modern ethos.

While the *kurta bundi* set is crafted from lightweight moss cotton, ensuring breathability and comfort, the sari, a symbol of grace and cultural identity, is re-imagined in viscose crepe for a natural drape and paired with a high-neck blouse. Both outfits have digitally printed saffron-and-green panels, inspired from ikat.

"Paris can be very hot in July," says Tarun, over a phone call from Delhi, adding that his first concern was to design attire that is airy and lightweight. "They are going to be wearing it for three hours. At 40-degree Celsius, how to make them look good? So, we focussed on cottons and kept synthetics aside. I wanted them to be natural. I think natural fabrics represent India."

As the athletes sail past the Seine during the opening ceremony, they will carry a piece of India with them,



Dress code for the games

Tarun Tahiliani designs ikat-inspired prints for Indian sportspersons for the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics 2024

making a bold statement in the fashion capital of the world.

"It truly reflects India's modern vision, the evolution of Indian fashion and the fusion of traditional craftsmanship with innovative design concepts. The uniform that we created for the athletes is very Indian but global, which is actually the vibe of India right now."

The design also incorporates the Ashoka Chakra, symbolised as blue buttonholes on an ivory base, representing peace and unity. The dresses have been paired with golden trainers

embellished with traditional Benaras brocade presented in a contemporary way.

"I did my research and learnt that India, unlike the rest of the countries, did not dress sportsmen and sportswomen in tri-colour at the ceremony. We added patch pockets. We used safari and hunting details, which I think scandalised the committee a bit when they first saw it. In today's world, the sportsmen are like our warriors going out to hunt and bring us trophies, like gladiators of Rome. I approached it that way."

Elaborating on the ikat-inspired panels, he says artisans in each region derive their own variations through textiles.

"Be it Pochampalli, the home of Andhra ikat in South India, the patolas of Gujarat, or the Sambhalpuri weaves of Odisha – it's a medium that is universal to India and hence the decision to use ikat-inspired prints in the ceremonial dress made sense. We didn't want to put together something from each State. We went about designing panels that look smart and elegant."

He adds, the decision to



(From left) Jarmanpreet Singh (field hockey), Nilakanta Sharma (field hockey), Shreyasi Singh (shooting) and Anjum Moudgil (shooting); (below) Tarun with Anjum. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

use gold brocade with the ivory dress showcased a quintessential colour combination that is unique to India and suits every skin tone. The brocade sneakers are also meant to stand out.

"Though bright colours also work on Indian skin, ivory became the predominant colour. That's why we put in a lot of tailoring details. The breast pocket of the *bundi* has the classic Olympic logo embroidered on it, with India and her flag emblazoned on top of the five circles. I wanted to dress the women in a *bundi* and tights, a sporty version of the tights and short kurta. But, the committee felt a sari is representative of India."

He admits that though it was challenging to work with people from across generations in the committee, he stuck to his guns.

"At this grand stage, athletes are seen and every nation puts its best foot forward. When playing in their athletic clothes, the focus is on how they play and perform in the sport. The medals are there as a reward for that. But in the fashion world, Paris being Paris, designers across countries put in a lot more effort. Shouldn't we want our athletes to go with the same confidence?"

