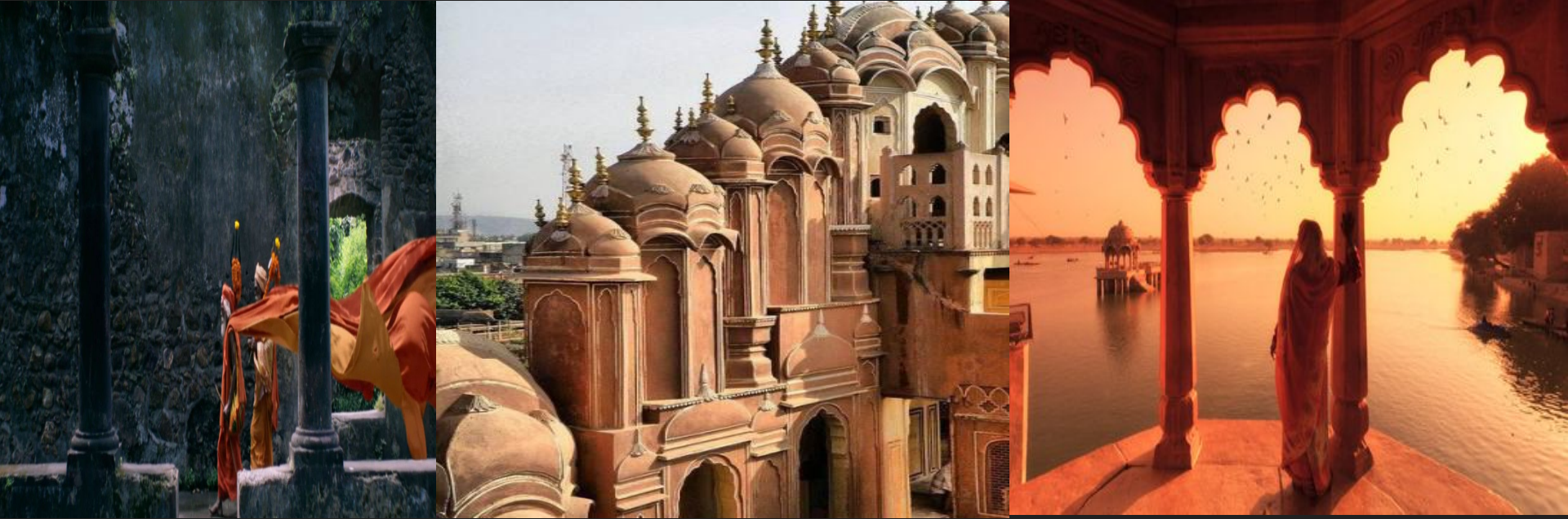


Fetishization / Culture Appropriation of Indian Culture in the Fashion Industry



Fashion is a reflection of creativity, personal choice, and cultural identity. Specific aesthetics, designs, or accessories have become vital to establishing cultural identities and continuing cultural traditions. In today's fashion, applying inspiration from other culture's designs/objects is quite common and has become the norm.

However, there seems to be uncertainty about where cultural exchange ends, and cultural appropriation begins.



# Cultural Appropriation

*Cultural appropriation is when members of a dominant culture take elements or artistic expressions from a minority culture and repurposing it in a different context without authorization and acknowledgment ( Johnson,2015).*

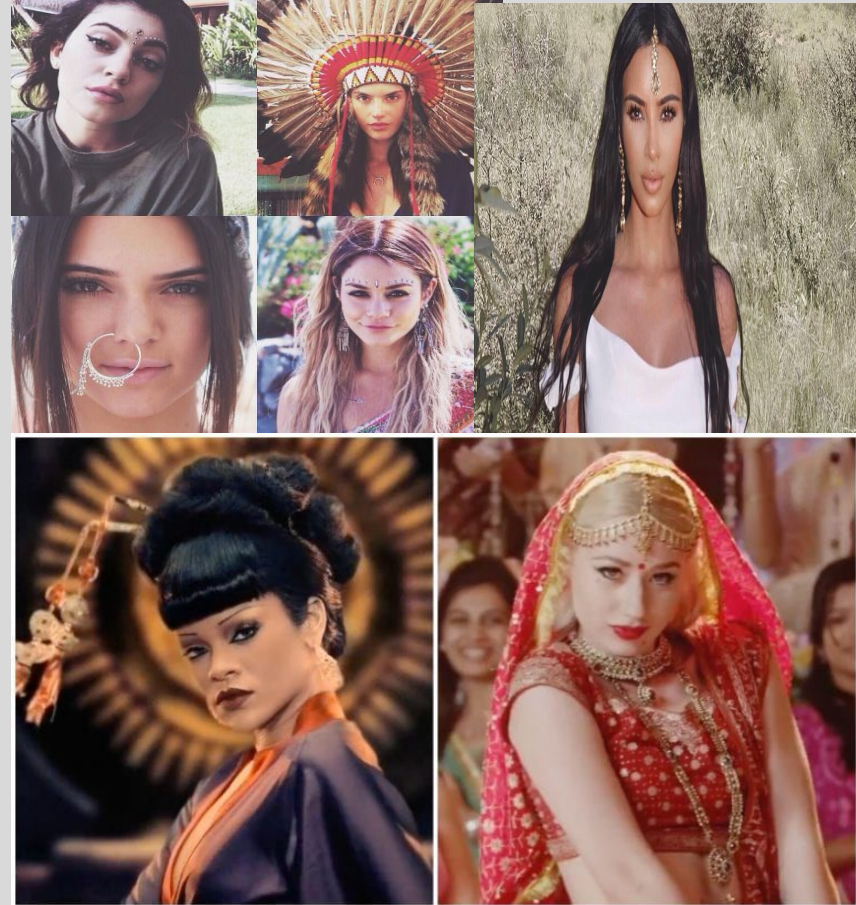


## *Fetishizing Indian Culture in Western Society*

Fashion, an outlet where many communities and societies follow for creative expression, is often criticized for appearance and cultural meaning. Trends such as celebrities wearing culturally offensive costumes to events or wearing cultural artifacts to festivals are common in popular media.

Bindis are adornments that are worn by women throughout Asia. It's worn between the center of eyebrows, and they are traditionally shaped as red circles.

The headpiece is known as “*maang tikka*”. It is an essential element and part of the sixteen traditional bridal adornments.





There are degrees of fetishes, and by any means, when the dominant culture in America decides to adopt this trend, it's called exotic and beautiful. However, when people of color embracing an aspect of their culture or religion viewed as too ethnic.

Beyonce's music video "Hymn for the Weekend" sparked a heated debate on social media and the fetishization of India was quite visible in the video.

The video incorporates Hindu religious symbols separated from their significance. She does many things that have no relation to the Indian culture as well as a total misrepresentation of real Indian culture.



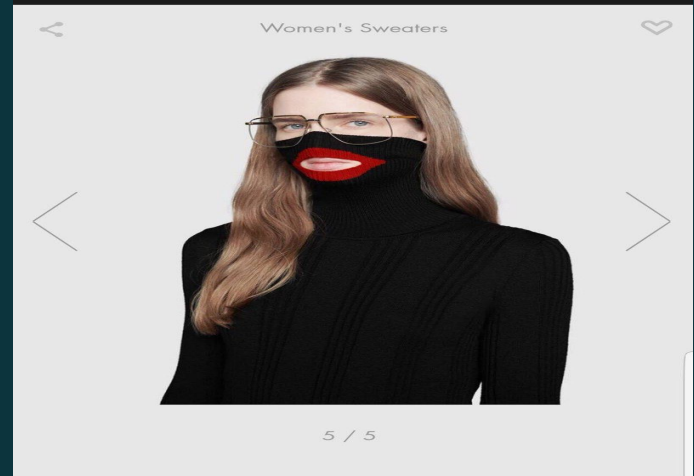
Fetishization of any culture is wrong. It is critical to call out inappropriate events regarding fetishizing people of race, color, shape, size and etc. It isn't always a compliment, and often it can be demoralizing and hurtful.



## *Influence in the Fashion Industry*

The fashion industry has encountered several allegations of cultural appropriation over the past decade. In recent years there have been several Luxury brands fallen foul with consumers over racist fashion displays.

- Kim Kardashian-West's "Kimono" bodysuit line, which was unaware and responsible for culturally appropriating Japanese culture
- Gucci was criticized for displaying straight blackface balaclava
- Burberry, stepped over boundaries on the topic of mental health showcasing a model on the runway styling a hooded sweatshirt with a drawstring, tied similar to a rope tied noose.



## ***Offensive Effects on Minority Groups***

Throughout culture comes a sense of identity, and when certain aspects of the culture are stolen, it creates a deep sense of loss. This seemingly states why cultural appropriation is grossly discriminatory and wrong.

H&M showed on its e-commerce site an African-American boy wearing a sweatshirt sporting the phrase: “Cutest monkey in the jungle.”

In the case of H&M, it resulted in the loss of a high-profile partnership with The Weeknd.

The Weeknd responded, “Woke up this morning shocked and embarrassed by this photo. I’m deeply offended and will not be working with @hm anymore,” in a tweet that reached his 8.45 million Twitter followers.







**Sikh Coalition** @sikh\_coalition  
Follow

The turban is not just an accessory to monetize; it's a religious article of faith that millions of Sikhs view as sacred. Many find this cultural appropriation inappropriate, since those wearing the turban just for fashion will not appreciate its deep religious significance.

**ravinder singh** @RaviSinghKA  
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Dear NON-SIKHS .... don't waste \$750 buying a fake n fancy @gucci turban from @Nordstrom !! You can inbox me your location and I can arrange FREE lessons in Turban tying in most places and provide cloth material..FREE ! Any colour ..

**Harjinder Singh Kukreja** @SinghLions  
Follow

Dear @gucci, the Sikh Turban is not a hot new accessory for white models but an article of faith for practising Sikhs. Your models have used Turbans as 'hats' whereas practising Sikhs tie them neatly fold-by-fold. Using fake Sikhs/Turbans is worse than selling fake Gucci products



Gucci was criticized for cultural appropriation retailing an indy turban for \$800 which received criticism during its launch. This topic was very controversial due to its disrespect towards Sikh religion.

On twitter critics called out , "Dear @gucci, the Sikh Turban is not a hot new accessory for white models but an article of faith for practising Sikhs,"

## *Profiting Off Culture*

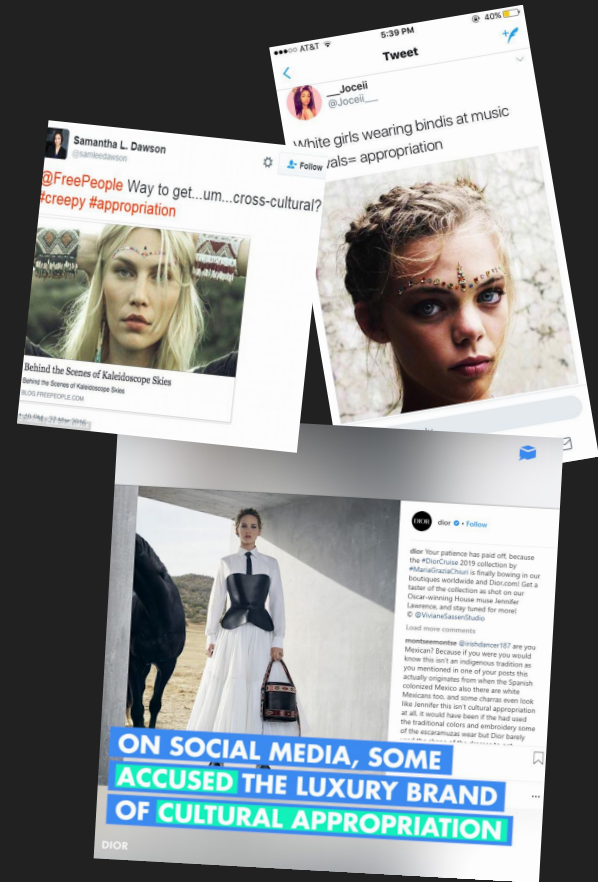
Taking elements and concepts from a culture is often seen as ways to profit off of aspects of other cultures. It's been argued that many corporations steal and appropriate ideas from cultures to rinse them and dilute them to meet their standards, only to repackage it and sell it to the masses.

However, not all designers have ill intentions producing a garment. Misinterpretation or disregarding the cultural significance of a traditional cultural expressions, even unintentional it can have drastic consequences both culturally and economically. In this modern era, Social media sets brand behavior on full display for all the world to view and judge. Even the most prestigious brand is likely to make a wrong turn at some point. Therefore the brand must respond if it hurt or offended its community.

# Social Media

Cultural property is something not always made for a profit but instead holding its significance. Often It can get lost when outsiders of the culture appropriate it.

- Brands and designers are now on social media, a growing social spotlight. To avoid cultural appropriation, sometimes requesting permission is a stepping stone toward building a deeper relationship between a traditional cultural expressions user and its holders.
- Tapping into a culture, involvement, and participation of the source community can take place in many ways. Brand needs to promote a diverse set of emerging talent, a strict examination of current products, and vocal transparency.



As interactions among various cultures increase around the globe, cultural mixing can benefit society regarding creative progress, human growth, and societal advancement. In some respects, the freedom of women. Cross-pollination of cultures is an essential feature of multicultural and non-segregated societies.

Therefore, restricting cultural appropriation does not mean putting all traditional cultural expressions off-limits and preventing any kind of intercultural communication in fashion. More specifically, global trends increase demand for authentic designs originating from source communities, spurring the local economy and raising their cultural profile ( Vezina,2019).

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