

**A Dissertation
On**

**CULTURAL APPROPRIATION AND CULTURAL
MISAPPROPRIATION**

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation titled ‘**Cultural appropriation and misappropriation**’ is an original work prepared and written by me, under the guidance of Dr **Javed Katri** Assistant Professor, Journalism and Mass Communication program, Navrachana University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communication.

This thesis or any other part of it has not been submitted to any other University for the award of other degree or diploma.

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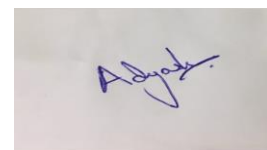
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I am thankful to my parents who have given me total support and encouragement throughout my research work.

Signature

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'A. Khatri'.

I whole heartedly dedicate this work

To My friends, family and my guide.

ABSTRACT

Cultural Appropriation and Cultural Misappropriation.

This research paper showcases about cultural appropriation and its misuse and misconception. I have taken references from several articles and research papers for the same. To further explain all the theories and concepts I have analyzed different examples and cases and commented on it. I have also covered various areas under the topic culture and its role in the society. While cultural appropriation is practiced a lot in the social media platforms, a little attention is given towards how culture is portrayed in the society and how it is taken up for emulsifying conflicts. We come across a lot of issues inter related to the incorrect notion of culture and its practices that people carry around. There have been different arguments on whether we should appropriate or not and that is also something that we'll be discussing in the research paper. Discussing about dominance and oppression we'll connect to the main topic, this may seem off track but this is an important part of the research. When different cultures come together on an equal footing, cultural exchange takes place. But what we nowadays see is not exchange but appropriation. Social media has become one of the major bases to locate such instances. The author of the articles and research papers I have referred to have both very different and somewhat similar explanations, which I have later cut down to a common conclusion. What we have learnt and known about culture has evolved a lot since. We have forgotten the true meaning of culture and its very existence. We as a society have made it something totally different than what it actually was. In the true sense we have not only changed the meaning of culture but also the meaning of our own identities, which is indeed threatening. So let's get into the discussion from here onwards.

Keywords: Cultural appropriation, Culture, Identity, Cultural appreciation and Criticisms.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

What is culture? Culture is the way of life, it's the general beliefs and customs that people of a particular sect (there are different sects having different beliefs) follow. In short, it is his/her beliefs that make an individual part of a particular group.

Cultural differences have always been a hot topic for raising conflicts. These have taken shelter under social media, which is the best base for arguments on both the most unnecessary and the most sensitive of things. Instead of accepting different cultures we are creating more gap in-between, such that will take a long time to cover up. Cultural appropriation is one of the cracks to such gaps. Culture is the way of life, but people have made it a source of entertainment (in a negative connotation) and societal disharmony. In the following research we'll be discussing about the issue of appropriating and creating social distress.

We'll not only discuss what cultural appropriation is but also various other aspects of culture and its meaning and the society. Culture has a major role in our lives, other than just festive and dress-ups. Thus discussing about such a topic makes it more important to go through certain flow. The flow starts from defining culture and finds its way through various other zones.

1.2 Objectives

The main aim is to find out:-

- How do these differences come up?

- How do these differences create problem?
- How do people take these social gaps as?
- What are the bases of these issues?
- How is today's generation dealing with this?

Culture is part of who we are thus making it more complex and confusing. The topic is very wide and thus needs to be narrowed down. These questions help to get a flow of the research and also bring it down to a conclusion in a simpler form. The topic is such that it needs to be discussed via various angles of the spectrum.

Cultural appropriation has become a major part of today's digital trend, where in people have fun to belittle anyone they wish to. When there is a topic which is one of the keys to social disputes, it becomes important to discuss. There are a lot of cases and that show the same. This has lead to the increase of a wide gap which we'll discuss later.

1.3 Hypothesis

- There are several articles which show that this issue isn't new, but has come to the limelight in recent years.
- This issue is affecting not only the youth but others as well.
- The issue is not subjected to only one thing, but it can be due to any kind of social bias.

Let's discuss a bit briefly about how and where cultural appropriation takes place. Culture appropriation not only defines culture as a whole but also many of its associates. Talking about its types; there are no specific types of cultural appropriation but it does take place in many forms. Culture includes music, art, crafts, dances, costumes; theatre and various other parts or forms or ways people follow it with (Nittle, 2019). Thus cultural appropriation takes various forms. It can be in music, art forms, songs, dance forms or even in the manner you talk. We will talk about some of the most appropriated forms of cultural appropriation.

One of such forms is headgears and other cultural accessories. Accessories being a major part of our day to day lifestyle becomes a part of our identity and many a times also identity of our culture. Thus appropriation taking place here becomes obvious. For example, when Selena Gomez wore 'bindis' with her on stage outfit which was not Indian, it sparked many to criticize. People did not criticize her for using 'bindis' as fashion, instead they criticized her for wearing it along with an outfit which was not Indian but also not acceptable to many. Similarly a Muslim-inspired headdress used as a fashion statement by many is also questioned. Another such conflicting form is music. Music is a platform where an individual showcases his/her singing and their view points on different aspects. Here in people have been criticized on the way they dress and the way they dance. Art and music forms that originated with minority groups come to be associated with members of the dominant group. As a result, the dominant group is deemed innovative and edgy. At the same time, the disadvantaged groups they "borrow" from continue to face negative stereotypes that imply they're lacking in intelligence and creativity. For example in 2013, Miley Cyrus became the pop star most associated with such kinds of appropriation and during one of her live performances, the former child star began to twerk, a dance style with roots in the African American community (Nittle, 2019). Here in she took twerk as something sassy and not as some important dance step of the African-Americans. In the 1950s, white musicians borrowed the musical stylings of their black counterparts. Because African Americans weren't widely accepted in U.S. society at that time, record executives chose to have white artists replicate the sound of black musicians (Nittle, 2019). With such a history the famous singer was bound to be criticized and targeted.

Another such area or form of appropriation is hairstyles. This looks totally weird to talk about at the first place. Because hairstyles are something we usually think has nothing to be appropriated about. Well it has though. When celebrities are getting the dread locks just for the fashion statement, there's where the appropriation comes into picture. Dread locks are one of the reasons many black people are being rejected at institutions and various other places thus it

being a very sensitive topic. Dread locks are part of these people's identity. This is something such celebrities should keep in mind and this not only adopts this hairstyle but also respect it.

While discussing about the topic many might have a particular question in mind. Does cultural appropriation take place before, or has it just occurred in the new millennium? During the Highland Clearances, the British aristocracy appropriated traditional Scottish clothing. Tartan was given spurious association with specific Highland clans after publications such as James Logan's romanticized work 'the Scottish Gael' (1831) led the Scottish tartan industry to invent clan tartans and tartan became a desirable material for dresses, waistcoats and cravats. Coming further into the 20th century, in America, plaid flannel had become work wear by the time of Westward expansion, and was widely worn by Old West pioneers and cowboys who were not of Scottish descent. In the 21st century, tartan remains ubiquitous in mainstream fashion (Wikipedia, 2019). The country clothing, in turn, was appropriated by the wealthy American Ivy League and later preppy subcultures during the 1950s and 1980s due to both its practicality and its association with the English elite. Appropriation has always been there it's just that people had somehow forgotten the actual concept and came up with a different version. In history at many stages people adopted different dressing styles from different cultures and made it a part of their own culture. That is where people forgot about appropriation and didn't give it much of a thought. Nor was there today's internet speed and spread where you share your views and reaches a thousand in a matter of seconds. This speed has given us both benefits and conflicts.

Now we should talk about how appropriation takes place differently in different countries. Yes you read it right. Different countries have different thought processes and are culminated with different set of cultures. Thus the idea of cultural appropriation also changes accordingly. For example in the United States, cultural appropriation almost always involves members of the dominant culture (or those who identify with it or are connected with) "borrowing" from the cultures of minority groups. African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and

indigenous peoples generally tend to emerge as the groups targeted for cultural appropriation. Black music and dance, Native American fashions, decoration, and cultural symbols, and Asian martial arts and dress have all fallen prey to cultural appropriation. In US cultural appropriation mostly comes to picture when the dominant class borrows something from the minority, where the dominant class is the Americans and the minority is the African-American. But Asians have a different perspective to it (Nittle, 2019). Asians have a variety of cultures living together since ages. Among these cultures, there is an exchange happening now and then. But sometimes some of these exchanges are not accepted and there lies the conflict. Also when other people borrow from the Asian cultures again it is a problem. Asians have been dominated in the history which makes them so furious about their culture.

Most of the people think cultural appropriation does not exist in Asian, they are very wrong. It totally does. For example when Indian accessories like ‘bindis’ and ‘bangles’, or Japanese dress ‘kimono’ or Asian Muslim’s ‘Hijab’ is taken as a style statement (Taira, 2018). Here in all these things being major part of their cultures makes it for an appropriation. The concerns of Asians in the West often overtake those of Asians back in or from Asia, due to cultural dominance of the West overall, even though Asians in the West claim that the voices of the other side are supposedly “overtaking” discourse over cultural appropriation—such as this Tumbler post from Kaagaz Kalam saying “Honestly folks back home in South Asia need to stop with the whole ‘cultural appropriation doesn’t bother me.’ (Taira, 2018)” This becomes a weird kind of neo-imperialism: enforcing the Western view of our home cultures, while claiming that we shouldn’t have a voice in how our culture is being used, because supposedly we don’t know what it’s like to be a minority or not be represented.

1.4 Conclusion

Concluding all the above discussions, it is very difficult to derive only one form or type of appropriation. Cultural appropriation is a vast and ever going topic. It can only be discussed in bits and pieces. Much of it still remains unasked about. We have still seen only a few examples and we know that those were not all. There is much more to it than we can discuss. Yet in this research paper we'll try to derive certain answers and conclusions for the same. Discussing the above things was important for understanding what it is and thus coming onto a single line of thought.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

We are going to discuss few articles and research papers and what the authors have to say about cultural appropriation. Many writers and authors have defined appropriation similarly but their way of expressing and their examples are very different and vary from each other in a lot of ways. The basis of the discussion remains the same but the conflicts and the perspectives change. By analyzing these articles and research papers we are going to dig out certain specifications which will give us a certain direction of thought.

2.2 Beth (2019) raises a question of what is cultural appropriation exactly, and a few more like- how do I avoid cultural appropriation and do we have the permission to use it freely? She answers these questions by saying that we don't actually enjoy the freedom of taking an aspect of another culture. While good intentions help, they don't automatically exactly save you from the negatives of cultural appropriation. In the article the author talks about how one has to ask own self about whether what they are doing is not a result of a "stereotype" and is just "borrowing from someone's culture" (Dreher, 2019). Whenever we use any aspect of a culture we need to keep in mind whether we are using something sacred to another culture or not which is an important part of any culture and can trigger disputes among people for example which the author gives- a Native American headdress, a religious symbol — in a flippant or "fun" way. There are many more aspects of a culture which are very important and significant to it which if not taken seriously can be appropriated negatively. Thus if you can safely answer

“no” too many of such questions, you will probably be able to avoid cultural appropriation. But this does not mean that you may not come across it.

The author gives a few examples of cultural appropriation one of which is: NFL's Washington Redskins have been accused of cultural appropriation with their use of a mascot of an American Indian wearing a headdress (ditto the Cleveland Indians and Chicago Blackhawks). Some Halloween costumes, such as a "gypsy," Rastafarian, or geisha are also considered cultural appropriation — each outfit of a particular culture plays into stereotypes that have led to the mistreatment or misunderstanding of a group of people, like in the above example.

2.3 The author talks about cultural appropriation as when a dominant culture takes things from another culture that is experiencing oppression. To make it more clear for us to understand the author breaks it into the following form:-

1. A ‘dominant culture’ is the most visible and accepted culture within a particular society.
2. ‘Oppression’ describes repeated and prolonged discrimination. It’s something that’s carried out through powerful organizations such as courts, the armed forces or schools (Reachout.com, 2018).

Author states that it’s not just one-on-one behavior, but a form of structural discrimination, which means it’s backed by powerful authorities. Racism, homophobia and sexism are all sorts of such oppressions.

In the article cultural exchange and cultural appropriation have been shown as two different things. The example given says that things like tea, gunpowder and pasta have been shared between different cultures throughout history. These aren’t the same as cultural appropriation, because they don’t involve power and are hence taken as “borrowings”.

When different cultures come together on an equal footing, cultural exchange takes place. But when dominant groups take from an oppressed group that is where appropriation takes place.

When the dominant group continues to steal aspects of the non-dominant culture, it continues the economic oppression and disadvantage of that culture.

In the article 'Assimilation' is described as what happens when minority cultures are forced to adopt features from a dominant culture in order to fit in, which is in short different from cultural exchange. These verdicts of the author shows that he is inclined towards cultural exchange and takes cultural appropriation as a right way to appropriate people who take aspects of a different cultural in a way they are not expected to.

2.4 The first thing which the author explains is that “cultural politics” does not signify two separate categories: it is not culture separated from politics. The term cultural politics refers to the way that culture—including people’s attitudes, opinions, beliefs and perspectives, as well as the media and arts—shapes society and political opinion, and gives rise to social, economic and legal realities (Newell, 2014). This is something which I personally agree to.

The author gives the examples like this one- Over in Uganda, President Yoweri Museveni’s new toughened legislation against homosexuality arises from similar underlying beliefs relating to contamination and disgust (i.e., the category of moral filth), to explain it more vividly. In the above example we can see how culture (public opinion, arts and media) imbues politics (government and the law) with perspectives about homosexuality that are predicated on the category of vermin, infestation, contamination. Sexual violence against women is somewhat similar to the above aspect.

The author cites another extreme example from the history, talking about the Rwandan genocide of 1994 which was initiated by a media campaign, especially on RTLM (i.e. Radio Television des Mille Collines), to “exterminate or crush the cockroaches”. Here we can see how the media used the “cockroach” metaphor in a similar way to “vermin”: but this time it was used in relation to ethnicity thus making it a very critical comment which resulted to be quite murderous (Newell, 2014). This is what the “cultural politics” is in its most violent face.

2.5 This article took references from different other articles to describe what cultural identity is from which I took the reference of the author named Hill. The author explains cultural identity or identities as a complex construct of the notion of human identity which is shaped by several interconnected facets of life that are not always distinct, nor static. For the purposes of this study, however, cultural identity falls under the umbrella of general communities of practice among the selected international school educators teaching in IB programs (Hill, 2012) as described by the author. In the article cultural understanding and appreciation for the cultural diversity is said to be the one that exists across nations and the multiplicity of worldviews that results from it is essential to developing international-mindedness. This indicates that the author is more in cultural appreciation and also supports it, instead of cultural appropriation.

There is a question asked to us in the article- is the identity or feeling of belonging to, as part of the self-conception and self-perception to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality and any kind of social group that have its own distinct culture (Hill, 2012)? To this I personally feel that identity is both for the individual and the individual existing in the society, somewhat matching to what the author says.

2.6 This article was searched to find out about what counter culture is. The article states about counter culture as a movement. It says that one could hear the deep sadness in the preacher's voice as he named "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government." With those words, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered a scathing indictment of America's war in Vietnam (Chernus, 2017). It was April 4, 1967. This was the example which was to start with the explanation about what the movement was.

It was something that would deeply disturb the developing antiwar movement as well.

After talking about what the movement actually was the author comes to explain about the current era, as the Trump era. The Trump era already seems like the most bizarre twist of all, leaving us little choice but to March and rally at a quickening pace for years to come. If

anything, the nation once again finds itself facing an exaggerated symptom of a far deeper malady.

The author states that one day, like the antiwar protesters of 1967, anti-Trump protesters will say: If the American system we live under can create this atrocity, there must be something wrong with the whole thing. Herein we see that the author not only talks about the movement which took place in history but also which could take place in the near future (Chernus, 2017). This article was based on the Vietnam and the US.

2.7 The article explains cultural appropriation as something which occurs when members of the dominant culture use aesthetic forms or artifacts from other cultures-or worse, profit from them-but don't show any respect for their deeper meaning. In its extreme, we can say it is a form of racism that perpetuates the old message that the Third World cultures are free for the taking (Spector, 2015).

When people from privileged cultures or backgrounds start to dictate what is and is not cultural appropriation, they are reinforcing the imbalance of power that has continued to steal the voice from people of color throughout history.

The ones who try and attempt to keep their own cultural "pure" and free of any borrowed aspect from another culture may well fall into a kind of cultural fascism (Spector, 2015), something that appears to be developing among certain kind of right wings. The author of the research paper indicates to the fact that cultural appropriation is not anything wrong but is taken in a totally different aspect. He tries to bring to light what cultural appropriation exactly is and how it is being used in actual sense.

2.8 The author talks about appropriation and misappropriation in its true sense. She states that she has never been a fan of globalization. She gives her personal experience as an example by stating- at age 18 or 19; I remember idealistically thinking that the shrinking world could support people in learning from each other and appreciating cultural differences.

I thought that the world was becoming a melting pot, and that perhaps one day we would all see each other as human beings who deserve respect and dignity. At this point in my life, I was traveling through several regions of Morocco and witnessed the cultural expressions that shifted with each change in climate (Schoenfeld, 2015). I was inspired by the relationships people had with their environment, and how all of their beautiful and practical material objects were reflections of their home land.

Cultures have always been cross-pollinated. It is when qualities of a culture are taken out of context without permission that appropriation becomes problematic and negative.

Actually this not even cultural appropriation, it becomes cultural misappropriation. The Webster's definition of misappropriation is to appropriate wrongfully or dishonestly (Schoenfeld, 2015). Misappropriation is thus the superficial adaptation of language, cultural expressions, lifestyles, rituals, practices and other manifestations of culture without an understanding of the deeper meaning or cultural context. Dominate cultures often appropriate other cultures which leads to misappropriation and not a friendly exchange of culture.

2.9 This is the perfect example of today's cultural appropriation. The author talks about social media being full of accusations and counter-accusations of a wrong called 'cultural appropriation'.

She begins by explaining why public discourse about cultural appropriation should matter to political theorists of multiculturalism, especially in the anti-immigrant mood that has engulfed many immigrant-receiving countries.

We then place cultural appropriation under the umbrella of cultural engagement, before identifying two forms of problematic cultural engagement – cultural offence and cultural misrepresentation – that are often conflated with cultural appropriation.

To elaborate cultural appropriation is the appropriation of something of cultural value, usually a symbol or a practice, to others (Balint, 2019). She goes on explaining that the two additional

conditions must be present to define an act of cultural appropriation: the presence of significant contestation.

Although this account of cultural appropriation sounds very casual, cultural appropriation is often wrong only in a trivial sense. Ultimately, we find that there are very few instances of seriously wrongful cultural appropriation, and that many of the actions decried as cultural appropriation may be wrongful, but not because they appropriate but because they want to belittle.

2.10 In this paper, the author takes appropriation of technology as the topic and cultural process as another topic to examine. Cultural appropriation, like technology appropriation, refers to the ways that people adapt and “make the technology their own.”

By cultural appropriation the author means two things:-

First, the ways in which people take up technologies into the social, economic and political spheres of their lives through processes of imagination. By including the work of imagination, this approach stresses that appropriation is not only a matter of unexpected reuse or of instrumental transformation, but is also a matter of finding them meaningful.

Second, cultural appropriation takes into account the appropriation of technology is increasingly that takes place within translocal contexts. As such, the appropriation of technology takes on alternate shapes providing challenges for design and research.

The author also explains cultural appropriation approach towards cultural appropriation as fundamental ideas:-

Appropriation may lie in how technology is framed and articulated, that is, transformed not as a technical artifact but as a cultural object (Silvia, 2012). As an example consider, the different social meanings associated with a communication that happens via face-to-face interaction, via email, or via SMS text messaging (Silvia, 2012).

Which technologies are appropriate for scheduling a meeting? What if the meeting is a romantic encounter or a family event? Answers for such things will always remain social media (different social media platforms).

Technology use takes on particular resonances and meanings in different settings, and this process of encountering technology as having specific meanings and values is a form of appropriation.

2.11 Identity is an integral part of social life. Thus discussing about it in the context of Cultural appropriation makes it important. It is only by distinguishing the identities of different groups that people are able to relate to one another and also to the culture they belong to.

To explain the above the author gives the reference of the sayings by-Haralambos and Holboln (2008), awareness of different identities provides some indication of what sort of person you might be dealing with, and therefore how you can relate with them (Ademolu, 2010).

Cultural identity appears in formal and informal organizations all over the world and it has the tendency to foster good relationship as well as breed sentiment and conflict. In today's era it is a click away to trigger conflicts and disputes with cultural differences occurring on various social media platforms.

The author says that the place of cultural identity in the modern world has been shrewd in diverse controversies. There exist a notion that the sustainability of organizations with people of diverse ethnicities may be under threat while on the contrary, some scholars perceived that cultural identity is a product of globalization which can still help retain cultures of the society within an industry; while few others have focused on the organizational environment as a determinant of the survival or abortion of any form of cultural identity. The examples for these can be seen in the hate comments of many celebrities as well as common people.

Culture has been used in different ways by different people in different sense. Culture is an individual's state of mind. Culture is being seen as a quality possessed by individuals who are able to gain the learning and achieve the qualities that are seen as desirable in a cultured human

being. Culture is a product of civilization and the society. People who possess the attributes of the civilized are regarded as the cultured. Culture as the collective body of arts and intellectual work within one society and culture as the whole way of life of a people has a major difference (Ademolu, 2010). This article as can be seen broadly explains what culture, identity, cultural identity and cultural identity in today's era is.

2.12 This paper addresses a topic which has been relatively neglected in the marketing and consumer research literature and other cultural aspects. This research paper broadly explains about counter culture in its marketing terms but also shows us how it at the same time revolves around the cultural aspect. Our aim is to rejuvenate discussion of what constitutes counter-culture and what it implies about culture and consumption.

The authors give account of the Hegel's lord bondsman tale, who says about the three different ways of framing this complex subject. These frames are entitled authentic counterculture, the mediation of counter-culture and counter-culture as difference.

Through the frames we chart the transition from revolutionary to aesthetic counter-culture and the central role played in this process by the developing commodity culture (John, 2014). In charting these changes within these frames it's discussed how the ultimate aim of counter-culture has shifted from transcendence to resistance, and asks whether the return to some more global theory might ever again be possible.

Finally we can say that the usefulness of Hegel's tale in the light of the previous discussion and suggest issues which require further attention from researchers interested in culture and consumption and also by the other people and the viewers.

Hegel's tale frames the relation between "mainstream" and "counter" culture in a complex manner. Counter-cultures are for the masters who feel alienated from nature and who seek reconciliation with their "true" natures.

The implication is that in making a claim to recognition and identity a counter-cultural movement seeks to create itself around the myth that it is the real, true, authentic counter-culture. This provides the first frame for our analysis of the diverse literature on the topic.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The methods and tools used in the study are to show and give results which prove the examples and case studies given in the research are relevant and true. Today's social media generation has taken the concept of Cultural Appropriation in a different context. They misinterpreted it and are using it to belittle others. The concept basically is about borrowing some form of cultural reference from other cultures.

3.2 Methodology

This study is to decipher between what the true meaning of Cultural Appropriation is and what people have made it. The topics undertaken the study are culture, appropriation, cultural appropriation, counter-culture, cultural misinterpretation and misappropriation, cultural identity, cultural conflicts, cultural politics, and social biases.

The methods being used in this research paper are:-

- Case studies/Content Analysis from:-
 - Articles
 - Books
 - Research papers.

Under case studies/content analysis different research papers, articles and books have been studied and observations been made on what the researchers or authors talk about related to the

concept and the adverse effects of misappropriation with the help of few examples. The data will be collected from these secondary sources.

There are various case studies that give perfect examples for the both the cultural appropriation and misappropriation. Other than these two concepts we have explored about other areas like cultural politics, counter culture, and other such topics which relate to it. These topics are inter-connected. Various topics like these are also very important to discuss because they explain the cause of social misleading and cultural rivalries.

Through analyzing these set of information and examples we understand what is the situation among so called “friendly cultures” exactly and how are people taking the cultural exchange as. These through examples will give us the answer to the question “why cultural appropriation and not misappropriation?”

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Data Analysis

The analysis of data on culture, appropriation, cultural appropriation, cultural misappropriation, cultural identity and cultural politics shows how mis-concepted we are about all these topics and their use in our society.

To understand the whole issue we need to start with the acknowledgement of culture. Culture is the way of life, customs and beliefs of a particular sect of people. This varies from region to region and individual to individual. Talking about appropriation, it comes when you take something for your own use, without permission and recognition.

Talking about Cultural exchange and cultural appropriation, these are actually two totally different things. Cultural exchange is where equally empowered cultures share or borrow their peculiar aspects with each other with respect and permission.

When dominant cultures take cultural aspects from minority cultures, showing their power and dominance, that is where cultural appropriation comes into picture. It is more of a reminder than appropriation to the dominant groups for their doings.

Cultural appropriation is not only something that occurs when members of the dominant culture use aesthetic forms or artifacts from other cultures, but also profit from them without showing any respect for their deeper meaning.

Assimilation is another part of culture wherein the minority cultures are forced to adopt features from a dominant culture in order to fit in, which is in short different from cultural

exchange. When people from privileged cultures or backgrounds start to dictate what is and is not cultural appropriation, they are reinforcing the imbalance of power that has continued to steal the voice from people of color throughout history.

Today's social media generation has taken this concept in a different context. The cultural appropriation used on social media or other digital platforms is actually cultural misappropriation. Cultural misappropriation is when people belittle other individuals for borrowing some form of cultural aspect from a culture other than their own.

Certain people, when want to create chaos and disharmony among other people, they bring up sensitive issues or topics and mix them up with their own biases and prejudices, later using it as a weapon to target a few.

The ones who try and attempt to keep their own cultural "pure" and free of any borrowed aspect from another culture may well fall into a kind of cultural fascism, which is another facet of culture and society.

There are various examples for understanding both -what cultural appropriation is and what misappropriation is.

To differentiate between these two aspects we need to cut down the broader aspect to a more narrow form. For that we'll take the example of Halloween dress codes as explained by writer Beth Dreher in one of her articles, which have been subject to cultural appropriation. Halloween dresses have evolved from the time it was just a celebration to the time where it is more of what you dress like. It fine to take inspirations from other culture's dress forms but not as a part of your Halloween costumes which depict supernatural or ghostly being.

Talking on a similar note, it has been observed that dresses worn by 'geisha', women who perform a traditional form of art of dancing and singing has been worn as a Halloween costume by many. That is where the appropriation takes place.



The picture on the left is the depiction of a geisha costume being worn as a Halloween costume. Here it is slightly different from the usual geisha dress ups. To give the Halloween effect they have used a black outfit, which is associated with dark entities.

Now taking an example let's talk about cultural misappropriation. An Indian teenage celebrity, Zara Wasim was criticized on choosing her religion rather than her acting and for 'being too religious'. The actress was humiliated and criticized on her decision of leaving Bollywood, because she felt it came between her and her religion. Netizens commented and posted various memes on her 'personal choice'. This is where the misappropriation takes place.

Another example where appropriation takes place is of singer Selena Gomez, where she was criticized for her using 'bindis' as a fashion statement. One can not dictate or force the other to follow a certain religion and not to follow another, or to follow few guidelines of a religion and not to follow. It is totally upon the individual whether he/she is willing to follow a certain religion and its customs. Misappropriation leads to a lot of baseless criticisms, which further lead to personal damage of the person criticized; mentally.

You can see few pictorial representations on the next page.



Selena Gomez wearing the bindis



Another example of how native culture is used in Pop culture and fashion, resulting in appropriation.

We'll discuss some of the basic cultural appropriations on a personal basis. Being a part of the country with a variety of cultures, appropriation comes at various stages. One example for it is; when you wear casuals to the 'Garba ground' people often appropriate you to wear the traditional outfit / the 'chaniya choli'. Some of the 'garba grounds' even deny entry without the traditional outfit. Garba is the most important part of the most important fest of Gujarat, i.e. Navaratri. Those 9 days are really special to them all around the globe thus making them appropriate others.

Another example is; being part of the Indian family most of the times if anyone is being appropriated it is to have good cooking skills, specifically for the females. More than part of the culture it is part of Indian customs and is faced by some or the other woman in some or the other phase of life.

Discussing about culture we need to discuss few other cultural aspects which are part of it's existence. Firstly, we'll get into what is cultural identity. Cultural identity is a complex notion of what an individual is in the society and what form of distinct beliefs and norms they carry along. In simple words it is what defines the identity of an individual in society according to their way of life. Like if you wear 'mangalsutra' and 'sindoor' then you are a married woman in the Hindu culture.

There is always a bad and a good side to anything and everything. Cultural identity is no different. It is the norms of the society that bring the bad and the good in it; though there are no norms but individual choices of life and the way of living free. For instance, 'hippies' show a resistant side to the norms of the society thus making them the 'bad guys'. Discussing cultural identity seems to be a bit off beat along with what we have been discussing along but it is important, because it is your identity (in any form) which tells about the society you live in and the beliefs you carry around.

Now we get along with what is cultural politics. Merely mentioning about this topic makes it a critical and sensitive discussion. Cultural politics is yet another part of culture which is very essential to discuss, because it tends to hold the power of turning conflicts into violence.

Cultural disputes are inter-connected with cultural politics. It refers to the way culture shapes the society, economic realities and politics (including people's perspectives). Many a times manipulating people to accept certain norms, politics gets a major hand. It also leads to misappropriation. But let's not get too deeper inside it.

Now coming back too misappropriation, it has not only lead to societal disharmony but also increase in psychological problems of individuals, identity crises, disputes and raised misconceptions in such a way that will take a lot of time and lives to be solved. It seems to be a very small issue, but what it leads to is the major deal. The massive impact of any cultural disputes can go down to the roots. Cultural appropriation at the first place should'nt exist, what should exist is –equally powered cultures, accepting mindsets, diligent people, all sorts of cultural exchanges, positive critisims and helping hands. But instead what we'll always face are –baseless rules, unethical prejudices, dominants and oppressed, insensitive actions and violence for no reason.

What we need is cultural appreciation and acceptance, more than appropriation. Letting people choose their way of life, without judgeing them, till their choices do not hurt others, is the best for our society and their the whole world.

CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION

There have been many articles written on cultural appropriation. There have been many debates on the same. Some people opt for cultural appropriation and some for misappropriation, either unintended or very well intended. But there are only a few among others who feel none of this should exist at all.

In the research paper we have analysed a lot of examples related to appropriation and come to the conclusion that it has been always there from the very beginning. It has been there since the ancient times. It had just been forgotten and there were natural and friendly exchanges of cultural items among people without any form of rivalry or conflict. But now people are back with new versions of appropriation.

This indicates that there always will be appropriation no matter what one does. But there are people who do not want appropriation at all. But there are only a few who feel that the only thing which should exist is sense of solemn, acceptance and kindness.

Whether its cultural appropriation or misappropriation, the sense of making each individual follow the same guidelines that the large group follows is enforcement and not correction, whether we acknowledge it or not. Culture is vast and has a large periphery which is hard to reach, thus most of its parts and meanings being untouched. People only tend to see culture from its outer form without knowing it in the deeper sense. In the articles we discussed we saw how people for their own benefit and pleasure conceptualize few unethical concepts on the mindsets of people, which are of no good intentions.

We can conclude that we see a lot of arguments the moment we open our social media platforms which have hurt a lot of sentiments and also people on a personal basis. We know what we see now a days and what we are going to see in future. Thus to stop these kind of agitations among people we need to culturally appreciate. Cultural appreciation is when you not only culturally exchange but also respect, accept and honor other cultures. It is the best solution for maintaining harmony of the society and the world as a whole. Appreciation and positive criticisms have always been better than appropriation and judgments. Thus as individuals let's positively criticize and appreciate the very being of another individual, and not try to correct them.

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APPENDIX

Picture 1 taken from Google

Picture 2 taken from Google

Picture 3 taken from Google

Research papers from Academia.edu

