**Commodification of Culture**

**This globalisation of fashion has a definite potential to confuse the young population.**

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Times are changing at a rapid speed and capital is acting as a catalyst in this reaction. The new wave of fashion has brought death to famous brands like Outfitters, Khaadi, Sapphire and the list goes on.

The Poor man was only left with one thing in his hand; cul­ture and capitalism even took that away. Marx gave the idea of alienation. The fourth type of alienation was the alien­ation of man from his society. This has been the case in the fashion industry of Pakistan as well, if not precise­ly, then on some lines. There is a rise in the fashion in­dustry of Pakistan, and one of the updates in this industry is the glorification of indigenous, a back-to-basics strategy. Can it be called a realization of own or a decolonization move­ment? Or is it just a new way of creating more capital by playing with deep-rooted emotional attachment to the local culture? The whole prospect of capitalism is ensuring the distinction between the elites and the masses. Therefore, they created a material that represented their power and unapproachability.

[US Air Force member sets himself on fire outside Israeli embassy in protest over Gaza war](https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Feb-2024/us-air-force-member-sets-himself-on-fire-outside-israeli-embassy-in-protest-over-gaza-war)

However, this is where capitalism bit itself. As the means of pro­duction are in the hands of the elite class, they emphasize mak­ing more and more. Sooner or later, the masses acquire the same material that once was only for the upper class. The wheel kept spinning till they came up with something more complex to emu­late; Rob Henderson called it “Luxury Beliefs”, which meant shift­ing from material to abstract.

In less than a decade, multiple businesses have opened in the fash­ion industry in Pakistan that ostensibly are working to revive local culture through their clothing lineups. However, it did something more than generating capital. It crippled the ordinary people from their norms, values and language. These supposed brands of culture became a status symbol. As the trends are always established by the elite class, when elites started wearing shimmery and shiny clothes, it took a while for the simple masses to make it cheaper and acces­sible. When that happened, elites adopted the doctrine of simple-is-the-new-sophisticated. The current stream is a hybridization of simple and indigenous and of abstract and material.

[Affordable Chinese mobile phones silently change Pakistan’s digital landscape](https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Feb-2024/affordable-chinese-mobile-phones-silently-change-pakistan-s-digital-landscape)

One of the most famous brands currently following this trend are Rastah, Naqees, Nukta, and Manto. Interestingly, these newly estab­lished brands have their names in Urdu Shahmukhi scripture. This phenomenon not only capitalized on the culture as predicted by Bor­diue, but it also alienated the poor from their own culture to a level they could never match. What once was read in books and libraries, argued in classrooms and debated about can now be seen written on the winter article hoodies of such brands. Unlike Manto, most of these brands use a modern Western streetwear fashion style while display­ing South Asian art and literature excerpts. This globalisation of fash­ion has a definite potential to confuse the young population. More­over, the new fashion ideology saves the culturally disassociated elites from guilt and shame; in fact, it makes them more prevalent as we live in a time when talking about decolonization is the new cool.

[An Air Force second to none](https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Feb-2024/an-air-force-second-to-none)

For the fiscal year 2023-24, the Pakistani government announced a minimum wage salary of 35,000 for a month. Assuming that the labour class is actually getting paid all of it, the average starting price of articles by these brands is around 8 thousand. As for Ras­tah, the most luxury brand currently sells a simple black T-shirt for 16 thousand rupees; some other articles can go up to 80 thou­sand and more. The disproportional pricing dictates that the tar­get market of these brands is not the masses, the ones who are the actual carriers of the culture, but the selected group. Consequent­ly, anyone wearing these, instead of representing the art or culture, knowingly or unknowingly flaunts their riches.

It seems a misnomer that a culture which, in its essence, is some­thing that gives a sense of belonging is being taken away from its true representative and can be bought in stores and online. It is true that a considerable chunk of this population is not even aware that such a paradigm exists. Yet, it is impacting them in a domino effect.

[Irrelevant persons’ entry in limits of exam centres banned](https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Feb-2024/irrelevant-persons-entry-in-limits-of-exam-centres-banned)

Morally, it is imperative to understand the great intellectuals whose writings and art pieces are being used as marketing for these brands. Not only does it encourage the pseudo and make-up mentality, but it also contradicts the values those writers stood for. For instance, if Manto was alive today, he would have rejected the blatant capitalization of his academy as he was a critic of capital­ism. Jaun Elia, another popular Marxist poet, his poetry can be seen printed on kurtas and shawls and sold at high prices.

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