

ROOTS *of* FASHION

An Indian Odyssey

Presented by Ash Gupta

Written by Giovanni Zelko

THE CONCEPT

Perhaps the most culturally important, fascinating, and most overlooked aspect of Indian culture, is its *fashion*. Why is it that one of the world's oldest civilizations which has been a cultural bridge between Europe and Asia since before the days of Alexander the Great, is still to this day shrouded in a cloud of mystery when it comes to fashion? To the outside world, and to its own budding youth, India is unjustly translated in simple terms as a poor, third-world, former British colony that has only just recently awoken into the global conscience as a nuclear power with one of the world's largest populations and one of the fastest growing economies. *But what of its fashion?*

In a country as vast and diversified as India, not only in terms of its population and topography, but also in terms of its cultures and religions, there is a core sense of oneness amongst its peoples that unifies them all under a singular system of values known as *Hindustani*. An often overlooked critical element in understanding and embracing the collective Hindustani world of India, is that the same group of cultural values is upheld by a multitude of extremely diverse and dynamic fashions. For example, revealing a bare ankle in one tribe is forbidden, while exposed breasts in another is the norm. From the northernmost Jammu/Kashmir states where snowy mountains have created a unique fashion of warm winter clothing, to the southernmost state of Tarmilnadu where a tropical climate engulfed in annual monsoons developed some of the world's lightest fabrics, India has one of the most diverse and colorful collections of clothing styles infused with cultural signifiers that humanity has to offer. Unfortunately, that incredible collection of fashion is about to disappear from the world forever.

There has never been a greater need or time to document and celebrate the myriad beauties of Indian fashion as now. Every year that passes, another layer of fabric is lost to history. It is absolutely critical to delve deep into India, throughout its many villages and cities spread across its great expanse of lands, and capture on camera the very *fabric* of Hindustani culture: its fashion. This magnificent and bold undertaking will be looked upon by future generations as the most important anthropological work of modern Indian history, and for good reason. It will not only be documenting the moment in time when India is shedding an important, irreplaceable element of its culture forever, but also the very moment when India as a society, especially its burgeoning youth, is catapulted into the great forefront of the global community as a world leader in science, medicine, and *fashion*.

Taking along five American photographers, Ash Gupta will lead his team in this bold expedition over a duration of two months. With cameras in hand, traveling across the magnificent topography of India to photograph both Indian and American models in ancient and modern Indian fashions, Ash and his team will be accompanied by a small reality TV crew who will document this inspiring and grueling undertaking. *Roots of Fashion* will not only be a historically important and breathtaking book of photographs, but it will also be a televised look at how a team of six photographers tackled and accomplished this amazing body of work.

Not unlike MTV's reality show, "Road Rules," *Roots of Fashion* will be an international television success, especially anywhere there are Indian viewers, such as in the Middle East, South-East Asia, Europe, and the Americas. All viewers, whether Indian or not, will be attracted to the compelling "fish out of water" story of five American photographers experiencing India for the first time as they tackle the most physically and emotionally demanding job of their career. Led by Los Angeles based photographer Ash Gupta, who was born and raised in India, the team will be fortunate to have its trusted leader also act as its cultural guide.

As the American photographers set out to shoot each segment of the book, the world will watch the team work under tremendous pressure while dealing with all the unexpected scenarios one finds in a foreign land. The world will be with them every step of the way, from preparing for their trip in the United States, to landing in India, to finally accomplishing their quest. Ash Gupta, the team leader, will also function as a "guide" for the audience of the TV series, walking them through the complexities of working in his home country of India, and explaining along the way how much India has changed in terms of fashion, and in what direction it is going.

Broken up into a series of 24 half hour episodes, the television aspect of this project will provide an entire season's worth of content that will be able to be licensed again and again throughout the world's television markets. The series can also be edited into a two hour special edition which can be sold as a DVD packaged with the book. Furthermore, a completely separate one-hour narrated travel documentary can be edited together from the overall footage to promote the vast beauty of the country for a tourism show.

The large coffee table book that will accompany and help promote and advertise the TV series will become an extremely popular and important historical and anthropological work documenting a country's vanishing identity as represented in the clothing worn by its people. This will also be the first ever compiled book representing all of India's magnificent styles in fashion throughout its 29 states, while also including images of non-Indian women wearing traditionally styled clothes next to women from villages who wear these clothes as a way of life and not as a "fashion" statement.

Both the book and the Reality TV series will explore not only India's past, but its future. Contemporary Indian designers who use traditional concepts and motifs in their new modern creations, especially from the critical markets of Bombay and Rajasthan, will have their new fashion designs showcased to illustrate where India is heading in the next decade. As a multi-media work, *Roots of Fashion* will become relevant across many fields outside of the obvious one of fashion as it reaches a vast global demographic. Tourism, art, and even politics in India, will be affected in constructive ways by being exposed to the work of *Roots of Fashion*.

PROJECT OUTLINE

I. CULTURAL NEED

A. THE FASHIONS OF INDIA HAVE NOT BEEN WELL DOCUMENTED

1. Despite Hindustani collective one-ness in values, there is a tremendous diversity in fashion.
2. The anthropological importance of encapsulating Indian fashion for future generations in one comprehensive work.

B. TRADITIONAL FASHION IN INDIA IS VANISHING

1. Western styles have heavily influenced many areas of Indian fashion.
2. Modern Indian designers are taking various elements of traditional fashion and are meshing them together to create a new Indian style.
3. The older generations who admire traditional Indian fashion are themselves vanishing.

II. MULTI-MEDIA MARKETING

A. A LARGE-FORMAT COFFEE TABLE BOOK OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1. Photographs of Indian women wearing traditional fashions from across India.
2. Photographs of Euro-American models wearing the same traditional fashions from across India.
3. Description of each fashion and its cultural heritage.

B. MULTIPLE TELEVISION PROGRAMS

1. A Reality TV series broken down into 24 half hour episodes following the photography team around India.
2. A two hour special edition of the same reality show for television.
3. Same two hour special edition released as a DVD with the book.
4. A narrated travel documentary exploring diverse regions of India.

C. TRAVELLING EXHIBIT OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEO

1. A multi-media exhibit including life-size prints of the photographs, samples of the traditional fashion, and video footage of the expedition.
2. Photos, books, posters, and DVDs will be sold at every exhibit.
3. India's rich beauty will be on exhibit around the world for all cultures to experience.

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