

# Cultural Appropriation and Appreciation

Continuing the conversation

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Before we begin... On phone browser, go to ["pollev.com/ashmidesai540,"](https://pollev.com/ashmidesai540) enter your name & pick one statement from below

**Which of these statements resonates with you when it comes to current state of cultural appropriation and appreciation in the US:**

- Cultural appropriation is rampant
- Both appropriation and appreciation exist
- All human beings are equal and must be treated like that
- How do we know who is the original appropriator?
- The topic makes me feel uncomfortable
- This issue affects fashion and creative arts rather than others
- This is not relevant to the Boulder community

# About me

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Ashmi Desai, PhD | she, her, hers

# Today

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- Appropriation or appreciation - How does one know?
- Bridging gap between intention and impact
- Examples from South Asian context
- The case of *Rasa* in Boulder
- Discussion and reflection

# The pitfalls of talking about culture

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- Evolving, hybrid, contradictory
- Multiple readings (polysemous)

What I hope as a take away from this workshop:

To consider cultural complexity, self-reflection and empathy



Not defining "true" culture, fact finding or locating blame



# Before we begin...

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5. The topic makes me feel uncomfortable
6. This issue affects fashion and creative arts rather than others
7. This is not relevant to the Boulder community

**most common responses**

# Media and popular culture





# People on culture



Culture is this thing that we can exchange among ourselves as human beings to knock aside our differences and build upon our similarities. Cultural exchange is the ultimate exchange.

— Chuck D —



lyric  
@slytherinpunk



Follow

If u don't understand cultural appropriation imagine working on a project and getting an F and then someone copies u and gets an A & credit.



..Acts of appropriation are part of the process by which we make ourselves. Appropriating - taking something for one's own use - need not be synonymous with exploitation. This is especially true of cultural appropriation. The "use" one makes of what is appropriated is the crucial factor.

# Boulder and around us

*Speak  
Sanskrit?*

*Neither do we*



This event is in no way meant to be culturally insensitive.

avoid Sanskrit to make it an inclusive space.

Before we go further...

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Please share one example about an incident when **you were in doubt that it is cultural appropriation or appreciation**

# Culture...

## Two Ways of Thinking about Cultural Differences - Objective vs. Subjective Culture



# Why is this important?

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- To live Interculturally
- To be a responsible member of the community
- To have an awareness of self and others
- To recognize how power relations influence cultural acts
- To be a cultural bridge, minimize harm

# What is Cultural Appropriation?

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...taking someone's cultural artifacts without their consent and profiting from it, whether that is in actual money, fame or some other intangible benefit..

Appropriation usually flows from up to down—as in a more powerful culture takes on the trappings of a less powerful one

| [Sabina Giado](#)

Western art and Western commerce co-opt, pigeonhole, and commodify so-called “native experiences..” the consumption of the Other a source of violence, passion, and spirituality

| [Deborah Root](#)

..the act of taking or using things from a culture not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect this culture | [Cambridge Dictionary](#)



# Cultural Competency continuum

**Cultural appropriation**

- Colonization, de-legitimization
- Little credit & profit to source
- Heightened competition
- Re-eroticizing of the colonized

Promoting culture

**Cultural appreciation**

- Forging connection to the community
- Offer support, exchange of ideas across cultures
- Culturally informed interpretations

# Cultural competency continuum

Cultural appropriation

Cultural appreciation

Promoting culture

- Colonial de-legitimation
- Little credit & recognition
- Heightened competition
- Re-eroticizing of the colonized

- Connection to the original culture
- Offer support of ideas across cultures
- Culturally informed interpretations

**IMPACT**

**INTENTION**



# Let's understand this through...

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## IS IT CULTURAL APPROPRIATION OR APPRECIATION?

- Who's making the money? Who's losing out?
- Who has the power to make it look cool (modern) for the world?
- Is the act reproducing stereotypes?
- Does it disrespect the beliefs and worldviews of people that inspired it?

Let's understand this through... Dal

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## IS MAKING DAL CULTURAL APPROPRIATION OR APPRECIATION?

- Who's making the money? Who's losing out?
- Who has the power to make dal look cool (modern) for the world?
- Is your dal reproducing stereotypes?
- Does it disrespect the beliefs and worldviews of people that inspired it?

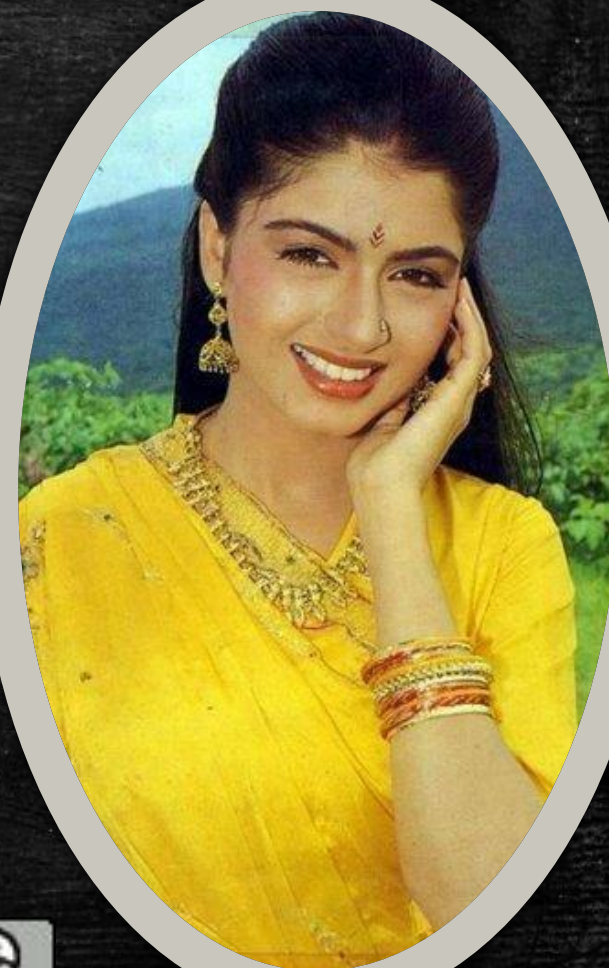


Let's understand this through... **Sari**



### IS MADONNA WEARING SARI CULTURAL APPROPRIATION OR APPRECIATION?

- Who's making the money? Who's losing out?
- Who has the power to make dal look cool (modern) for the world?
- Is the sari reproducing stereotypes?
- Does it disrespect the beliefs and worldviews of people that inspired it?



Let's understand this through... **Hair**

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## IS HAIR CULTURAL APPROPRIATION OR APPRECIATION?

- Who's making the money? Who's losing out?
- Who has the power to make Hair look cool (modern) for the world?
- Is the musical reproducing stereotypes?
- Does Hair disrespect the beliefs and worldviews of people that inspired it?



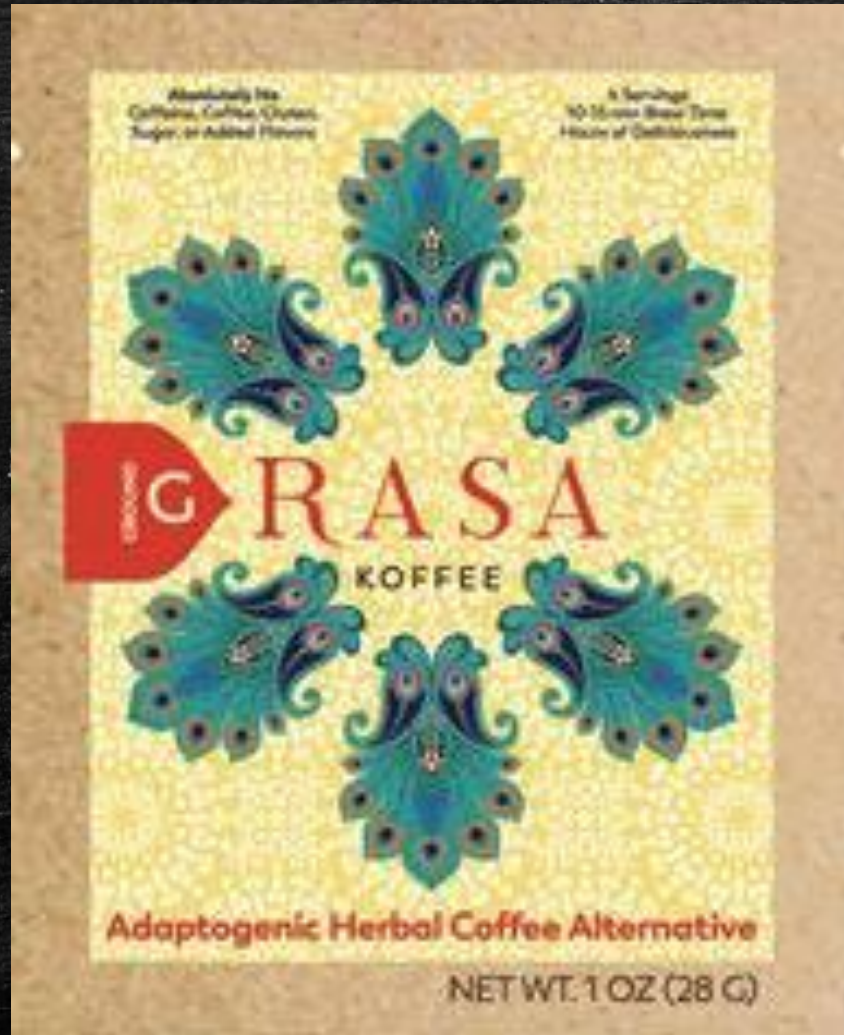
Pick any of these examples and talk to a person next to you:

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### Are they cultural appropriation or appreciation?

- Who's making the money? Who's losing out?
- Is it reproducing stereotypes?
- Is it an informed representation of people's cultural heritage?
- Does the act disrespect the beliefs and worldviews of people that inspired it?

Let's understand this through... **Rasa**

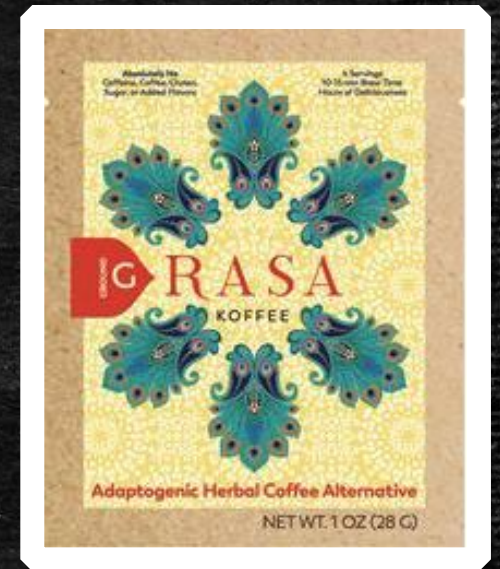
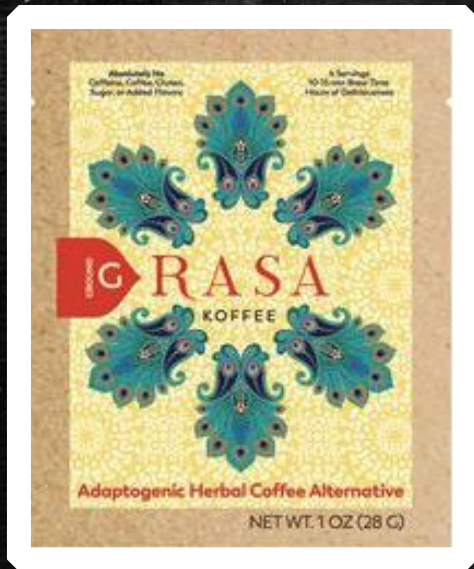


- Healthy alternative to coffee
- Beating stress and gaining energy
- Culturally conscious

# Let's understand this through... Rasa

## IS RASA CULTURAL APPROPRIATION OR APPRECIATION?

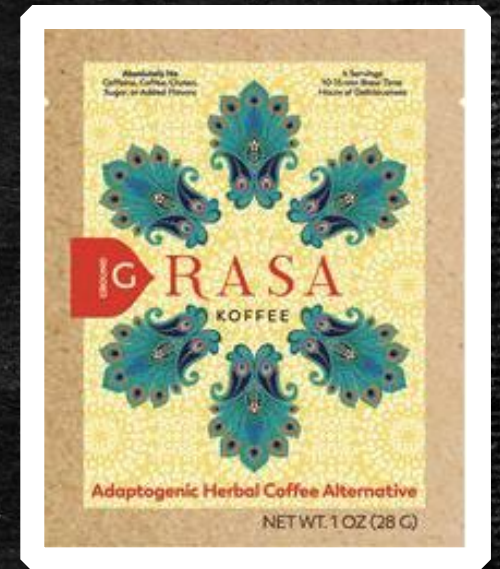
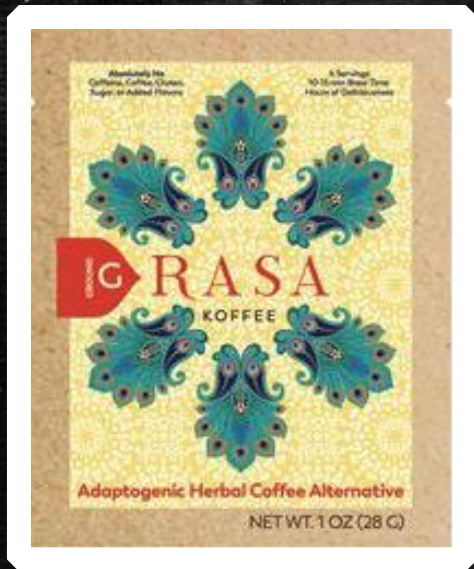
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# Let's understand this through... Rasa

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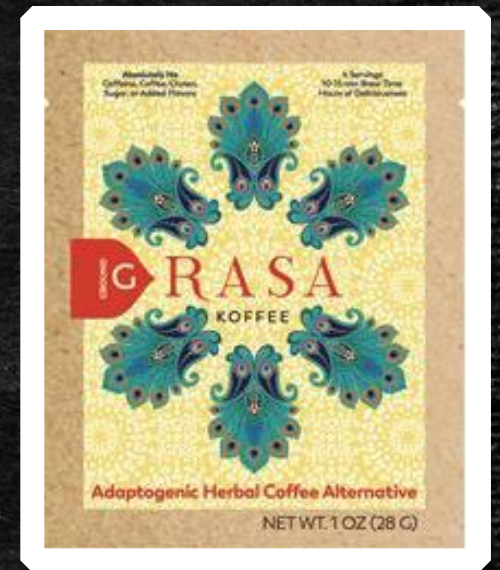
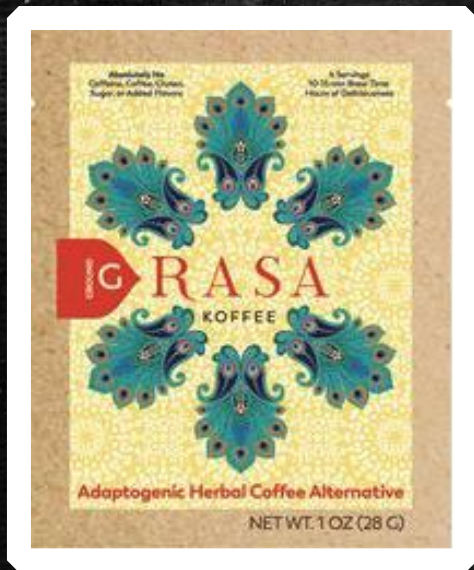




# Let's understand this through... Rasa

## IS RASA APPRECIATION?

- Does Rasa provide credit, profit to source culture/s?
- Is it forging connection with community?
- Does it support respectful exchange of ideas, collaboration across cultures?
- Is it a culturally informed interpretation of a heritage?



Let's understand this through...

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Think of a moment  
when **you were in  
doubt about cultural  
appropriation or  
appreciation. Ask  
yourself -->**

- Who's making the money? Who's losing out?
- Who has the power to make Rasa look cool (modern) for the world?
- Is Rasa reproducing stereotypes?
- Does it disrespect the beliefs and worldviews of people that inspired it?

# Parting thoughts...

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- Impact vs. Intent matters
- Cultural codes are complex and hybrid, consider power relations
- We all share responsibility

“The morale judgement of the whole concept of cultural appropriation however, cannot be determined based purely on what is being borrowed/adopted and the impacts they can have vary ...” (Cuthbert, 1998, pp. 257-260)