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THE EMBRACE OF A BLEEDING HEART

When Prada became 'Chappal Chor' in India

Indian fashion continues to make its mark globally, and the Kolhapuri chappal made a surprising appearance in Prada's Men's Spring/Summer 2026 collection in Milan. However, the luxury brand's failure to acknowledge the footwear's Indian origins has drawn strong criticism



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With traditional Indian styles like Nehru jackets, turbans, naths, cummerbunds, and dupatta-inspired scarves often appearing on international runways, it's now time for the Kolhapuri chappal to take the spotlight. The handcrafted leather sandal recently made a striking debut in Prada's Men's Spring/Summer 2026 collection at the Deposito di Fondazione Prada in Milan. While many celebrated its presence on such a prestigious platform, others criticised the lack of acknowledgement of its Indian roots.

A legacy centuries in the making

Kolhapuri chappals are a traditional craft, practised for generations by cobblers in Maharashtra and Karnataka. Dating back to the 12th century under King Bijjal's rule in Bidar (now in Karnataka), the footwear became popularly known as 'Kolhapuri' in the early 20th century, when it began to be traded in Kolhapur, Maharashtra. In 2019, Kolhapuri chappals were awarded a Geographical Indication (GI) tag and are now recognised as a cultural product of eight districts across both states. Crafted using sun-dried buffalo hide, these sandals are stitched entirely by hand without any synthetic materials or adhesives. A single pair can take up to two weeks to complete, depending on the complexity of the design.

Kolhapuris on the Prada runway

Of the 56 looks Prada showcased, at least seven featured what appeared to be Kolhapuri-inspired sandals. These tan leather flats, priced at over Rs 1.25 lakh, included a classic T-strap, toe loop, and intricate embossing, cutwork, and braided details. Each pair was embossed with Prada's name. However, despite the clear resemblance to the Kolhapuri chappal, Prada made no mention of India or the traditional artisans behind the design in their show notes—sparking criticism from fashion experts and audiences alike.

Appreciation or appropriation?

Fashion designer Philu Martins observed, "Prada featured Kolhapuri-style chappals in one of its fashion collections, bringing global attention to this traditional Indian footwear. The brand reinterpreted the classic Kolhapuri design with a luxury twist, often using premium materials, refined craftsmanship, and high-fashion styling."

She added, "This move sparked both admiration and conversation. On one hand, it highlighted how traditional Indian crafts are influencing international runways. On the other, it raised questions about cultural appropriation versus appreciation,

especially regarding the lack of credit or benefit to the artisans who originally created these styles. Let's give a loud shoutout to the real MVPs, our skilled Indian artisans who've been crafting this style for generations."

On the pricing, Philu noted, "Prada's handcrafted chappals are usually priced at Rs 50,000 to Rs 70,000 in the Indian market. But given the workmanship and the fact that the style originates from India, I feel the pricing should be at least 30% lower than what they currently charge. From the streets of Kolhapur to the catwalks of Milan—that's some serious sole power."

A strategic move or cultural oversight?

Designer and fashion mentor Melvyn Noronha offered a strong critique, "As a mini representation of what is happening in today's world, Prada took the Indian Kolhapuri chappal and called it the Prada sandal. The way of shortcuts is the new fad that's popularly followed. It is a world of entitlement, from turning what you touch to gold with hard work

and passion, we have moved to a time where people would prefer a 'touch it and it's mine' mentality." He continued, "To a certain extent we are to blame, for we have failed to credit, support, and value original systems ourselves. We are the first to point a finger at Prada, but did we ever give the sandal its due? Did we record the original designers? Do we celebrate its artisans and history? Do we even own a pair before this publicity?"

"This could very well be a publicity stunt to re-engage with the Indian audience. While it might succeed in drawing attention to Prada, it risks overshadowing the cultural significance and authentic artistry of the Kolhapuri chappal. It may be a strategic step forward for branding, but a significant step backwards for traditional art."

Respect, not charity

Fashion designer Verma D'Mello expressed both pride and disappointment: "It's a proud moment that India's artisan legacy was showcased at Milan Fashion Week, where Kolhapuri chappals—traditional handcrafted leather slippers from Kolhapur—were featured by Prada."

She added, "Known for their durability, intricate design, and eco-friendly, vegetable-tanned leather, these chappals are meticulously hand-stitched without nails or synthetic materials. Once worn by rural communities for comfort and strength, today they reflect a blend of heritage and contemporary style. More than just footwear, they symbolise India's rich artisan legacy."

However, she didn't shy away from critiquing Prada's lack of credit. "It's disheartening to see iconic elements of Indian craftsmanship showcased without any nod to their origin. These sandals are not just fashion accessories—they represent centuries of tradition, artisanal skill, and cultural identity. When global brands repackage our heritage without credit, it reduces vibrant traditions to fleeting trends."

"We're not asking for charity, we're asking for respect, acknowledgement, and inclusion of the communities who've kept these crafts alive. Fashion should be a platform for collaboration, not appropriation."

Designers defend the chappal's cultural value

Saligao-based designer Ninoshka Alvares Delaney, known for incorporating Kolhapuri chappals into her collections, stated, "Kolhapuri chappals have always been, and will always be, iconic. They've graced the runways of every one of my fashion shows not because they needed validation, but because they are a testament to India's rich heritage and unparalleled craftsmanship." She added, "While global luxury brands like Prada may just be discovering their allure, we in India have proudly worn and cherished this timeless style for decades. The world isn't validating the Kolhapuri; it's simply catching up to what we've always known to be true."

Discussing her creative process, she said, "My designs have always sought to forge a deep connection with our roots, nature, and the earth. The Kolhapuri chappal perfectly embodies this ethos, making it the ideal footwear to complement my aesthetic and philosophical approach. It's more than just a shoe, it's a symbol of craftsmanship central to my design philosophy."



Model showcasing Kolhapuri chappals in Ninoshka's collection

SWIPE RIGHT

Taylor Swift surprises with a song at Travis event

Taylor Swift stunned fans in Nashville with a surprise performance of her 2014 hit 'Shake It Off' during Travis Kelce's Tight Ends & Friends concert. Held at the packed Brooklyn Bowl, the pop star took the stage after encouragement from fellow performer Chase Rice, borrowing Kane Brown's guitar and asking the crowd, "Theoretically, how loud can we get?" Dressed in a sleek black mini-dress and knee-high boots, Swift dedicated the song to "our favourite players... the tight ends," playfully referencing Kelce's NFL position. This marked Swift's first live performance since reclaiming ownership of her master recordings last month. The concert closed out Kelce's Tight End University summit, which he co-founded in 2021 to mentor fellow NFL players. Swift's appearance underscored her support for Kelce, the couple arrived hand-in-hand, stayed close throughout the night, and danced together as Chase Rice performed his hit 'Cruise'.



Chaturvedi romances Chae Soo-Bin in cute new ad

In the new ad shared on Crocs Japan's Instagram account, Actor Siddhant Chaturvedi shares the screen with South Korean actor Chae Soo-bin. Chae, the K-drama star, who is known for the Netflix series 'When the Phone Rings', and Siddhant share a breezy chemistry. Chae Soo-bin's character is seen walking on the streets while it's raining. Siddhant's car zooms by and splashes water on her, and then speeds off. She is angry but then sees Siddhant repairing his car tyre across the road. She offers him a shade under her umbrella, giggling. They walk together, and she splashes water on his shoes. Their cute chemistry won over fans who were surprised to see the unusual pairing in the ad. Siddhant was last seen in 'Yudhra', his first solo film as an actor.



Charlize Theron Joins Co-Stars Uma Thurman, at 'The Old Guard 2' Premiere in L.A. The 49-year-old Oscar-winning actress rocked a black sheer jumpsuit and black blazer

'I AM NOTHING' TO SCREEN AT LISBON'S MUSEU DO ORIENTE

An emotional biopic on Goan artist Vamona Navelcar, 'I Am Nothing' directed by Goan filmmaker Ronak Kamat, will make its mark in Portugal

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The acclaimed documentary 'I Am Nothing', directed by Goan filmmaker Ronak Kamat, will screen at the Museu do Oriente in Lisbon on September 5. The screening is part of the 'Goa in Focus: Documentary Voices and Visions' series, a cultural initiative by Fundação Oriente that showcases the diversity and depth of Goan cinema and identity.

A LIFE ACROSS CONTINENTS

'I Am Nothing' is a biographical documentary chronicling the life of Vamona Ananta Sinai Navelcar (1929–2021), a masterful yet underrecognised Goan artist. Spanning three continents, Asia, Europe,

and Africa, Vamona's life was as layered as his art. Despite receiving accolades abroad, his contributions were largely overlooked in his native Goa.

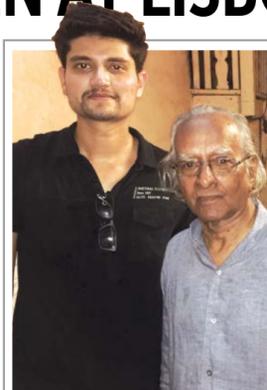
"Vamona's life and work are a testament to the power of art to transcend borders, time, and even ego," says director Ronak Kamat. "He never sought the spotlight, yet his art speaks volumes about the human condition."

ARTISTIC VOICE & PHILOSOPHY

Vamona, who spent significant periods of his life in Portugal and Mozambique, is deeply revered in both countries. The film captures his most iconic works from his elegant single-stroke line drawings to his playful yet profound "clown series." Beyond

technique, however, it delves into his philosophical embrace of humility and detachment. "His later works were signed 'Ganesh', in honour of his late brother. He chose anonymity over fame. That's what moved me—the idea that greatness doesn't always come with a name tag," says Ronak.

The original music and sound design by Ashley Fernandes add an atmospheric layer that reflects the emotional tenor of Vamona's art and life.



SCREENING IN LISBON

The screening on September 5 forms part of the 'Goa in Focus' cycle, which celebrates Goan documentary filmmakers while examining the territory's layered cultural history. It will run alongside the Ganesh Photo Art Exhibition, with post-screening discussions to follow.

As the documentary screens in Portugal, it closes a narrative circle, honouring a man whose art touched lives far beyond his village in Goa, and whose philosophy of "nothingness" remains more relevant than ever.

A LONG-OVERDUE RECOGNITION

Though honoured abroad, Vamona remained largely uncelebrated in Goa, a fact the film addresses. Ronak adds, "Fundação Oriente contacted me earlier this year. They were

curating a programme and felt this film belonged there. Knowing Vamona's close connection to Portugal and the love people there have for him made sure that I quickly agreed."

EIGHT YEARS IN THE MAKING

The documentary is the culmination of an eight-year journey that began in 2017. Ronak, based in Miramar, meticulously shot and edited the film entirely on location, weaving together rare archival footage, interviews with Vamona himself, and reflections from noted voices including artist Suhas Shilkar, writer Anne Ketteringham, and academic Nandkumar Kamat. "This film is very different from any other I've made before, and probably unlike anything I'll ever make again," Ronak explains. "The process was slow, intuitive,

and intimate. It demanded patience and respect." Ronak is an acclaimed writer and director renowned for his work in documentaries, short films, and screenwriting. His films have been showcased at numerous international film festivals, earning prestigious awards such as 'Best Documentary' and 'Best Short Film'. His short film 'Bare won the 'Best Film on Women' Award at CICFF (India) 2021 and received an 'Honourable Mention for Best Director' at the Eastern Europe Film Festival in Romania.

