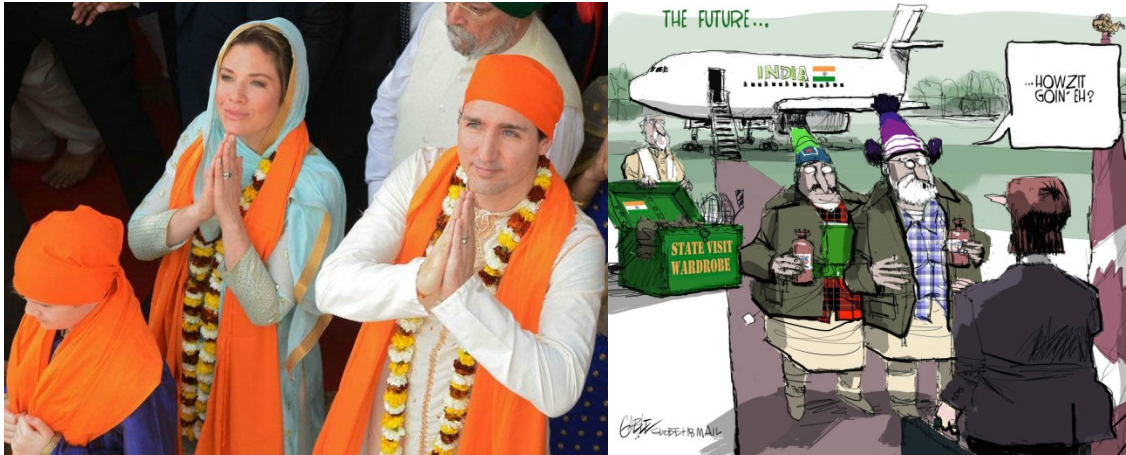


The Indian dress debacle: How Canada's government got it wrong



The Globe and Mail's hilarious cartoon juxtaposed against Mr. Trudeau's attempt to be respectful to another country in a state visit reveals a lot about cultural appropriation and our expectations concerning the differences between ourselves and others.

Mr. Trudeau was attempting to reach out to India's people and their leadership by wearing native clothing. He did not mean harm. But he received much criticism for wearing garb that everyday Indian people do not wear.

"Is it just me or is this choreographed cuteness all just a bit much now? Also FYI we Indians don't dress like this every day sir, not even in Bollywood!"

This opened the door for the cartoon featuring the Indian PM and his wife dressed as Bob and Doug Mackenzie. The humour is fair ball when we realize that few Canadians dress like Bob and Doug even though they are longstanding Canadian icons.

A more interesting criticism may be that both India and Canada have Constitutions that allow soil based citizenship as opposed to a blood base. What this means is that anyone coming to India or Canada as legal residents can attain full rights of citizenship after a period of residence²³.

This is certainly not the case in other nations. For example, in the former British Crown colony of Hong Kong, only ethnic Chinese people can become citizens.

What it also means is that both India and Canada are open societies which value the idea that one may dress and conduct oneself according to the rules of one's own culture and be fully accepted and embraced in each nation.

Let's hope that when Mr. Modi comes to Canada, he wears the same clothes as he does in his home country. **Js/Mar4/18**

¹ <https://twitter.com/OmarAbdullah>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_nationality_law

³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/canadian-citizenship/become-canadian-citizen/eligibility.html>