

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <div>ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER</div> <div>FASHION, CLASS, AND CULTURAL ADAPTATION: RE-SITUATING GODNA WITHIN THE SOCIOLOGY OF FASHION</div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <div>Sociology</div> <div>KEY WORDS: Sociology of Fashion; Trickle-down Theory; Class Distinction; Cultural Adaptation; Class legitimization; Godna (Santhal tattooing); Body Adornment; Symbolic Boundaries</div> |
| Mr. KumarVikas                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Fashion Communication Department, National Institute of Fashion Technology, Patna, India. Associate Professor and Research Scholar at Banasthali Vidyapeeth, Rajasthan.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Dr. Rajshree Mathpal                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Assistant. Professor, Department of Sociology, Banasthali Vidyapeeth, Rajasthan                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| ABSTRACT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <p>This article explains how Godna, the traditional tattooing practices among Santhal communities, can be understood through the same sociological lenses scholars use to analyze fashion. Rather than viewing Godna as a static folk custom, we approach it as a dynamic social text whose meanings shift as it circulates between communities, markets, and institutions. Classic fashion theories, ranging from early ideas about imitation and diffusion (Mandeville, 1714/1924; Spencer, 1897; Tarde, 1903) to twentieth-century accounts of conspicuous consumption and distinction (Veblen, 1899; Simmel, 1957; Bourdieu, 1984; Davis, 1991), offer a clear framework for understanding why Godna can be admired as ornamentation in one setting yet stigmatized or sanitized in another. In this explanatory account, we slow down each theoretical step. We define fashion as patterned change unfolding within a background of social order, and then show, with accessible examples, how Godna's movement from village rite to "heritage fashion" follows familiar status dynamics. We highlight three mechanisms that make the connection concrete: distinction and emulation (who imitates whom, and why status rises or falls as a look spreads), conversion of capitals (how embodied skill and ritual knowledge become economic or symbolic value), and institutional translation (how museums, NGOs, brands, and design schools legitimize some versions of Godna while muting others). Drawing on interpretive synthesis and field insights from eastern India (2023–2025), we present Godna as a living demonstration of fashion's sociological processes. Like garments that move from exclusivity to mass uptake and back to elite differentiation, Godna's motifs and placements travel across class boundaries, encountering both opportunities (recognition, income, safety standards) and risks (appropriation, loss of provenance, unequal rewards). The article concludes with practical implications on provenance, pedagogy, public curation, and workplace inclusion. By treating Godna as fashion and heritage, we show how cultural adaptation can achieve class legitimization without erasing women's authorship or community meanings (Bourdieu, 1984; Wuthnow, 1987; Davis, 1991).</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <div>INTRODUCTION</div> <div>Fashion, Order, and the Moving Border of Distinction</div> <p>Sociology has long treated fashion not as frivolous surface but as a patterned social process in which change unfolds against an enduring background of order (Simmel, 1957; Davis, 1991). The paradox, flux nested within structure, renders fashion analytically potent. Following the classic insight that fashion behaves like a laboratory organism for social theory (Bell, 1976), this article places Santhal Godna, a suite of tattoo practices, at the center of a dialogue between trickle-down/class-distinction theory and the twin processes of cultural adaptation and class legitimization. The claim is simple: Godna, despite being cut into the skin rather than stitched onto it, travels the same sociological routes as clothing, imitation from above, counter-imitation from below, symbolic appropriation, market translation, and institutional legitimization.</p> <div>1. Why Study Godna Through the Sociology of Fashion?</div> <p>When students hear "fashion," they often imagine catwalks, seasonal trends, and rapidly changing silhouettes. Sociologists, however, use "fashion" to describe a broader pattern: recurrent change that still feels ordered, because shared rules tell us what counts as tasteful, respectable, or timely (Simmel, 1957; Davis, 1991). In this sense, fashion is a moving boundary that separates "now" from "then" and "us" from "them." That same moving boundary helps us understand Godna, which is not merely decoration on skin but a social signal tied to kinship, life-cycle transitions, and moral worlds.</p> <p>Thinking of Godna as fashion does not trivialize it. Instead, it allows us to trace how meanings travel. The same motif can be revered within a Santhal village, celebrated as "authentic art" in a craft museum, and commercialized as a print on a premium textile. Each context asks the wearer or artisan to meet a different set of expectations. This is exactly what</p> <p>fashion theory is built to analyze: how status, imitation, and classification work together to shape value (Veblen, 1899; Bourdieu, 1984; Davis, 1991).</p> <div>2. The Core Ideas: Trickle-Down, Distinction, and Diffusion, Explained Slowly</div> <p>Early observers of fashion noticed a simple pattern: people look upward in a status hierarchy and copy what they admire. Mandeville (1714/1924) wrote that elites change styles to remain distinctive, while others imitate them as closely as possible. Spencer (1897) described two forms of imitation. "Reverential imitation" is respectful copying of the elite; people follow the elite style precisely to borrow prestige. "Competitive imitation" is more disruptive; people imitate partly to deny exclusivity, signalling that the elite are not unique.</p> <p>Tarde (1903) sharpened the focus on diffusion, how a practice spreads. He distinguished customs, which tie us to the past and the local (for example, a village rite repeated each generation), from fashions, which tie us to the present and the nonlocal (for example, a new design that arrives from elsewhere). This distinction helps in teaching: customs stabilize identity, while fashions introduce novelty and mobility.</p> <p>Twentieth-century theorists extended these insights. Veblen (1899) argued that elites use conspicuous consumption to display status. Simmel (1957) turned the idea into a cycle: elites adopt something novel; non-elites imitate it; once imitation spreads, elites move again to regain difference. Davis (1991) summarized these patterns as the class distinction approach. Finally, Bourdieu (1984) explained why some signals "stick" as high status: groups possess different mixes of economic, social, and cultural capital. They deploy these resources to draw symbolic boundaries, deciding what counts as refined or vulgar, modern or backward.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 80                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | www.worldwidejournals.com                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

These ideas apply to clothing, but they are not limited to fabric. They also apply to body modification, tattoo, piercing, hair, and skin, because all of these are media through which societies store and display meaning (Entwistle, 2000; Turner, 1994). Once we accept that, it becomes straightforward to read Godna within the same frame.

### 3. Godna as Ornament and Social Text: What Changes When It Travels?

Within Santhal communities, Godna codes genealogy, protection, and womanhood; it can mark the endurance of pain, the passage into adulthood, and a sense of belonging. In that setting, the tattoo is not a trend; it is an ethical and cosmological commitment.

However, when Godna is viewed from outside, particularly in urban or global arenas, it becomes visible as style. Motifs move from forearms and ankles to gallery walls, textiles, and jewelry. Artisans create portfolios. Studios introduce hygiene protocols and after-care sheets. Digital platforms showcase designs. In this newer setting, the same motifs begin to circulate like fashion, subject to tastes, seasons, and markets.

Teaching this transition benefits from concrete examples. Imagine three scenes:

1. A village ceremony where elder women guide a younger woman through her first Godna. The meaning is ritual and relational; prestige is local.
2. A craft fair where the same motifs appear on printed stoles and silver pendants. The meaning is aesthetic and commercial; prestige depends on curator endorsements and price points.
3. A fashion studio where a designer collaborates with a Godna artist, placing motifs on limited-edition garments. The meaning is hybrid, part tribute, part trend, and prestige is linked to brand reputation and media attention.

The object looks similar across scenes, but its classification shifts: from custom to fashion, from memory to merchandise, from kinship to market. Fashion theory helps us articulate what is gained (recognition, income, safety standards) and what is at risk (context, authorship, equitable reward).

### 4. Distinction and Emulation: Who Imitates Whom, and With What Effects?

The classic "trickle-down" model predicts that elites innovate first, non-elites copy, and elites move on. In indigenous arts, the flow can appear reversed. Urban tastemakers often "discover" subaltern aesthetics and elevate them to elite status. Once a motif is reframed as "heritage chic," it may be adopted widely by middle-class consumers. This is not a simple trickle-up. It is a loop: appropriation upward, re-entry downward through commercial channels, and renewed differentiation by elites who commission rarer, more esoteric placements (Hebdige, 1979).

For Santhal women and artists, the loop has mixed consequences. Some feel pride when their culture receives attention and economic opportunity. Others worry about stigma if visible tattoos are judged "unprofessional" in mainstream workplaces. Bourdieu's framework helps here: the same motif can operate as symbolic capital (cool authenticity) for elite consumers while remaining a symbolic burden for a subaltern wearer if institutions have not legitimized it (Bourdieu, 1984). In short, it is not only the sign that matters; it is also whose body, which context, and whose authority.

### 4. Conversion of Capitals: From Pain, Skill, and Memory to Portfolio and Pay

Godna practices contain embodied cultural capital: craft technique, ritual knowledge, and the disciplined endurance of pain. Historically, that capital was exchanged within kin and

village networks. As Godna enters broader circuits, artisans learn to convert these assets into other forms:

Economic capital: paid commissions, teaching workshops, licensing motifs for textiles and prints. Symbolic capital: awards, media coverage, and curated exhibitions that mark excellence and Institutional capital: affiliations with NGOs, craft councils, and design schools that open further opportunities.

The conversion is uneven. Without contracts, provenance records, or platform access, artisans risk losing control over their intellectual contributions. Conversely, with collective organization and ethical partnerships, artisans can retain authorship and share fairly in value created downstream (Appadurai, 1986; Douglas & Isherwood, 1979). For students, the key takeaway is that markets do not automatically reward originators; institutional mechanisms are needed to align recognition with authorship.

### 6. Institutional Translation: How Legitimacy Is Manufactured

Legitimacy rarely appears by itself. Institutions, museums, festivals, design institutes, brands, and cultural ministries, provide the labels and narratives that tell audiences what a practice means. When an exhibition explains Godna's ritual context, credits women artists by name, and shares revenues, it performs curatorial legitimacy that strengthens community standing. When a brand abstracts motifs without credit or context, it performs commodifying legitimacy, elevating the look but weakening the link to its origin.

Both routes produce visibility, but they lead to different social outcomes. The curatorial route builds symbolic capital for the community and encourages careful transmission of skills. The commodifying route moves quickly but often leaves the originators undervalued. In classroom discussion, ask: What kind of legitimacy are we building when we teach, sell, or design with Godna? The answer signals whether cultural adaptation becomes class legitimization with justice or simply aesthetic extraction.

### 7. Cultural Adaptation Without Erasure: Practical Negotiations

Cultural adaptation is the process by which communities rework meanings under new conditions (Wuthnow, 1987). In many Santhal contexts, three negotiations are visible:

Ethico-ritual adaptation. Even when professional or educational settings discourage visible tattoos, women may retain songs, stories, and gifting practices around Godna, or opt for temporary versions (henna-style trials, decals) to honor memory while navigating workplace norms.

Aesthetic adaptation. Artisans experiment with hybrid motifs, updated palettes, and placements that converse with urban tastes yet preserve core geometries and narratives. This is not a loss of authenticity; it is an intentional redesign that keeps the practice legible to new audiences.

Risk adaptation. Studios and workshops adopt sterile tools, hygiene protocols, and consent forms. These measures do not dilute culture; they translate it into modern public health standards, strengthening dignity and safety.

These adaptations interact with class. Middle-class consumers can access curated studios and communicate their choices as "art." Rural wearers may face stricter scrutiny. Thoughtful institutional support, scholarships, fair contracts, and public campaigns, helps balance these differences.

### 8. "The Same Fate as a Dress": Understanding the Fashion Cycle in Godna

Sociology of fashion often observes a cycle: innovation → diffusion → loss of exclusivity → re-differentiation (Simmel, 1957; Davis, 1991). Godna's journey echoes this pattern,

though on the body rather than on fabric. Motifs that were once tightly local become widely visible; as visibility grows, exclusivity declines; elites seek rarer commissions or esoteric placements; institutions step in to stabilize meaning. That is what we mean when we say Godna “meets the same fate as a dress.” The crucial difference is permanence. Tattoos are not as easily changed as clothing, so the risks and responsibilities of diffusion are higher for original wearers. This is why legitimacy, consent, and provenance matter more here than in a typical garment trend.

### 9. Method: How This Argument Was Built

The article offers an interpretive synthesis. It draws on classic and contemporary scholarship in the sociology of fashion and body adornment; it also uses field insights from eastern India (2023–2025) to ground abstract ideas in lived experience. The goal is not to produce a statistical test but to build a clear conceptual map teachers and students can use to understand how fashion logics travel across media, from cloth to skin.

### 10. Implications for Policy, Pedagogy, and Practice

If we accept that Godna is both fashion and heritage, several practical steps follow.

**Provenance and revenue sharing.** Certification schemes can document motif lineages, credit named artists, and ensure shared benefits when motifs appear on products. This encourages ethical partnerships and discourages extraction.

**Education and co-teaching.** Design schools and craft councils can invite Godna practitioners as co-instructors, blending technique with cultural context, while teaching basic IP literacy and contract skills. This is a direct route to class legitimization that respects authorship (Bourdieu, 1984).

**Curated publics.** Museums and festivals can foreground women's authorship and ritual meanings, using clear labels and fair compensation. Such curation builds symbolic capital, which often translates into safer workplaces and higher pay.

**Workplace inclusion.** Organizations can update dress and appearance codes to avoid penalizing culturally significant tattoos. This reduces symbolic penalties that fall unevenly on subaltern wearers and supports dignified cultural adaptation.

### 11. Conclusion: Godna as a Lens on Fashion's Social Mechanics

Seen through the sociology of fashion, Godna is not a peripheral curiosity but a central case. It lets us watch how status signals move; how imitation and distinction tug against each other; and how institutions solidify or scramble meaning. The journey from village rite to “heritage fashion” demonstrates that class legitimization is possible without erasure, provided we attend to provenance, consent, and equitable reward. The theoretical claim, then, is straightforward: the trickle-down/class-distinction approach and the processes of cultural adaptation explain why Godna can be celebrated and contested at the same time (Davis, 1991; Bourdieu, 1984; Wuthnow, 1987). The pedagogical claim is equally clear: when we teach fashion, we should teach skin alongside cloth, because both are media through which societies write their values.

### REFERENCES

1. Appadurai, A. (Ed.). (1986). *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge University Press.
2. Bell, D. (1976). *The cultural contradictions of capitalism*. Basic Books.
3. Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste* (R. Nice, Trans.). Harvard University Press. (Original work published 1979)
4. Davis, F. (1991). *Fashion, culture, and identity*. University of Chicago Press.
5. Douglas, M., & Isherwood, B. (1979). *The world of goods: Towards an anthropology of consumption*. Penguin.
6. Entwistle, J. (2000). *The fashioned body: Fashion, dress and modern social theory*. Polity.
7. Godart, F. (2012). *Unveiling fashion: Business, culture, and identity in the most glamorous industry*. Palgrave Macmillan.
8. Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture: The meaning of style*. Routledge.

9. Kawamura, Y. (2005). *Fashion-ology: An introduction to fashion studies*. Berg.
10. Mandeville, B. (1924). *The fable of the bees: Or, private vices, publick benefits* (F. B. Kaye, Ed.). Clarendon Press. (Original work published 1714)
11. Simmel, G. (1957). Fashion. *American Journal of Sociology*, 62(6), 541–558. (Original work published 1904)
12. Spencer, H. (1897). *The principles of sociology* (Vol. 2). D. Appleton.
13. Tarde, G. (1903). *The laws of imitation* (E. C. Parsons, Trans.). Henry Holt. (Original work published 1890)
14. Turner, B. S. (1994). *The body and society: Explorations in social theory* (2nd ed.). Sage.
15. Veblen, T. (1899). *The theory of the leisure class: An economic study of institutions*. Macmillan.
16. Wuthnow, R. (1987). *Meaning and moral order: Explorations in cultural analysis*. University of California Press.