

Delhi High Court Rules in Favour of Rahul Mishra in Landmark Plagiarism Case, Redefining Indian Couture as Intellectual Property

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The long-standing battle against design plagiarism in Indian fashion has reached a turning point. On **August 4**, the **Delhi High Court ruled in favour of Rahul Mishra**, marking a landmark decision that recognises **couture as intellectual property** and sends a strong message to copycats across the industry.

Mishra's case centred around his **Tigress motif and Sunderbans floral embroideries** from the *We The People* couture collection, first showcased at **Paris Couture Week in 2023**. These designs were later found replicated and sold across e-commerce platforms and local markets, promoted aggressively on Instagram. Unlike isolated copying, the investigation revealed an **entire supply-chain operation**, with one manufacturer supplying plagiarised fabrics to multiple online sellers.

The court's **ex-parte ad-interim injunction** restrained all **18 defendants** from producing, advertising, or selling counterfeit designs. Several admitted guilt, issued apologies, and were ordered to disclose sales records. In a significant move, retail giant **Etsy was compelled to reveal the identity of one infringing seller**.

Justice **Tejas Karia's ruling** carries three major takeaways for the fashion industry:

1. **Couture is Intellectual Property** – Embroidery motifs, silhouettes, and garment details are now formally recognised as protectable creations. This strengthens the legal standing of designers who often see their work reduced to disposable "inspiration."
2. **Ignorance is No Excuse** – Retailers can no longer claim innocence by blaming suppliers. If a business profits from copied designs, it is complicit in the infringement.
3. **Protecting Luxury and Craftsmanship** – Replicas dilute the exclusivity and cultural value of couture. Mishra's global reputation, built through years of craft and investment, was undermined by cheap imitations.

Ironically, the unauthorised knockoffs gained visibility when celebrities like **Kapil Sharma, Badshah, and social media influencer Orry** were photographed wearing the counterfeits, amplifying the issue on social media.

This verdict goes beyond Mishra's personal victory. It reinforces that **Indian fashion must protect both its heritage textiles and modern couture**. From Banarasi brocade to runway innovations, safeguarding originality is essential for India's global fashion credibility.

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