

Design Resource

Sikh Turbans

The Identity of Sikh Community

by

Parul Bhatti

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/sikh-turbans>



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<https://dsource.in/resource/sikh-turbans/about>

About

In India, the status of the turban is linked with religious beliefs and practices in addition to the already existing social ceremonies. An understanding of the position of the turban in Indian society can be attained through the examination of cultures, conventions and customs it used to be, or is prevalent in.

Once considered to be a sign of holiness, wearing of turban eventually became a symbol, highlighting the wearer's position and rank in society, with its size, material and style. The Sikh Gurus, however, vehemently opposed the stratification of society. They diligently worked to create an egalitarian society dedicated to justice and equality which the turban (known as 'Dastar' in Punjabi) is the symbol of sovereignty.

While other communities gradually discarded the wearing of turban mostly due to the influence of western culture but for the Sikhs, the turban remains the gift of their Guru which they carry everywhere they go. It is believed that the turban deepens the connection between the Sikh and the Guru. Just by being exposed to this regal quality, their attitudes and psyche get shaped in a certain way and instil the Sikh with a great deal of responsibility.

In recent years turbaned Sikhs became victims of mistaken identities, especially after 9/11. Globally, as well as within India, there is a growing ignorance and misunderstanding about the role and purpose of the Sikh turban. In such a context, this research becomes important in exploring and documenting the historic, spiritual and cultural significance of the turban which has become an indispensable part of the identity of a Sikh.



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Origin on the Word Pag

In the Persian language the 'Turban' was pronounced as "Dulband". Its origin is said to have come from 'Dul' or 'Tul (pronounced by Arabs) or 'Volvere' which applies to head-wrap. From the Turks, it might have passed on as Tulipant, Tolliban, Turbant etc. in the European usage of Turban. "Turban" as a headdress became popular in the medieval era and the word 'Turban' came along during the 15-16 centuries. This head-dress is mostly referred to as 'Pugree' in different regions of India but pronounced differently.

It is commonly known as Dastar or Pag in Punjabi, Paghri in Hindi and Dastar or Paghri in Urdu. Chira, Safa, Siropa, Madhasa, Keski and Parna are the other terminologies in Punjabi which is used to refer to the different styles of head-dress prevalent in Punjab.

The word Pag is said to be originated from Puk in Hindi, which means white hair or grey hair signifying wisdom thus, Pag stands for prudence and sagacity.

The word Dastar is originally a Persian term, which means a head-dress tied up with the help of hands. Pag is generally a term used for a common man's turban in Punjab, whereas, Dastar denotes the turban of an eminent or religious person. Hence, there is a sense of honour and gracility associated with the term Dastar.

Safa, comes from the Hindi word Safai, which means cleanliness. It is mostly seen in Punjabi households, where while working, men carry a 2.5-meter long and 1-meter wide cloth on their shoulders. They use it as a handkerchief to clean their face and hands. And many times while working they tie the same cloth on their head as a turban.

Siropa comes from the word Sir in Hindi, which means head and so Siropa denotes a cloth which can be tied on the head. It's a symbol of honour, given to a person for doing outstanding work for the Sikh welfare.

Madhasa comes from the Punjabi word Mundi which means head. This style of turban used to be worn during wars to protect the head and neck from the opponent's attack.

It's a heavy turban, which is tied very tightly on the head. Chira is used to denote a red turban, which is less wide and is usually worn during weddings.

Keski, comes from the Punjabi word Kes, which means Hair. The headdress used to cover the hair is known as Keski.

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Source: 'Pag ate Pag da Sabhiachar' Book by Jagdev Singh Aulakh. Translated from the original in Punjabi.

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History of Turban in India

The History of Turban in India and its Symbolic Meaning:

‘Wearing of turban symbolizes to the wearer that he is living in the ‘Divine Law’. In India, Turban has been an essential and integral part of humans since times immemorial irrespective of religion. Our traditional headgear is full of surprises; especially the fact that it existed as early as 10,000 B.C.’

- By Kalgidhar Trust Publication from the document ‘Preserving Turban’.

Prehistoric Age:

Head-dress or Pugree, as a concept of costume, had come down to us from the hoary past. In the pre-historic era, men felt the need to protect themselves against the natural odds followed by the desire for self-beautification, whereupon the gradual evolution of costumes started.

Long before the primitive man could weave clothes for himself, he conceptualized a ring-like structure which was merely tied around the waist with no cloth around and it served as a pocket to keep the stone-age man’s genius gadgets. This ring was made up of plant bough or stem which enabled the ancient man to keep his hand free and movement unhampered. Nevertheless, this was the conscious beginning of the evolution of costumes. Similarly, the pre-historic man used to hang leaves, flowers and feathers from this head as natural suspenders for self-pleasing decoration.

The first reference to headdresses is found in the pre-historic rock paintings which were created by hunter-gatherers some ten to thirty thousand years ago. In the Indian rock art sites of Kumaun, Bhimbetka or in Rock art sites in Kerala one can find visual records depicting mainly hunting and dancing, wherein head-dress remained important. Those headgears were mainly of animal horns or mask-like animal faces over their head which would help them disguise themselves as animals while hunting.

Ancient India:

‘There are references to headgears in Rig Veda which were sported during Yagnya and those are of varied colours similarly, in the Mohenjodaro and Harappan culture. In the later Vedic period Brahmins were placed above the king in the then hierarchical order of the society. In the play Charudatta the Brahmins officiating at the sacrificial session of Duryodhana are described as having their feet rubbed by the head-clothes of king- Rajnaam vestanap-attaghrstacarnah. Thus it was a description of symbolism of submission of Kings to the Brahmins on the occasion of ritualistic sacrifice.’

- By Dr. Gautam Chatterjee, Pugree-Head Dress Heritage of India.

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In those days men of higher social strata sported head-wraps which were richly padded clothes of varied shapes. They also had their hair tied with a ribbon. Men and Women of Royal families or Goddesses wore elaborate head-gear and coiffure. But commoners did not sport any headgear. We find some descriptions of Indu's headdresses which were wire fan-like structures and of spiral form and some were bossed headdresses.

During Ancient India, Pugree was a concept of dignity and authority, and Yagnya was performed wearing Pugree. In the Vedic period during Rajasyua Yagnya one had to wear Pugree in a particular style, rationality of which is hard to understand but seems to have been a deep-rooted custom. Around 300 B.C. one finds references about Rishi Apasthamba asking his student to take off their Pugrees while approaching their teachers. This was practiced evidently as a token of respect to the teachers. This gesture is similar to the western civilian gesture from the 17th Century until the 1960s, where it was considered polite to take off one's hat on meeting a social superior or a lady, or when greeting an acquaintance.

In the post-Vedic era 600-320 B.C. we find evidence of voluminous headdresses mostly known as Ushnisha, and it became a common phenomenon. Dr. G. S. Ghurye elaborated that "The head-dress known as Ushniha is the earliest mentioned in connection with eastern people known in early literature at the 'Vratyas'. It is described as white and bright. It used to have cross-windings and was tied with a tilt". Thus the spiral, fan-like shape of the Indus head-wrap in the post-Vedic period evolved into a cross-bind Ushnisha studded with Jewels.

'While tracing the historical development of head-dress one can find that Indian society used head-wraps centuries before the European world took to wearing hats as a part of its regular costume. During the Byzantine civilization in the 11th century A.D. head-dress became a regular feature which was later passed on to the European world. Whereas, Indian society was sporting head-dress as a regular costume by c. 10,000 B.C. From archaeological evidence of Bharhut, Bhaja, Bodhgaya, Sanchi, and Mathura in Northern India and Mahabalipuram in the South, we find that head-dress for males and females were common. The early headgear was voluminous and Pugree were folded over the head with a loose richly embroidered end.'

- By Dr. Gautam Chatterjee, Pugree-Head Dress Heritage of India (internet).

Dr. G. S. Ghurya, an exponent in costume history analyzed that the female wore Pugrees without any projections. But the male Pugree was projected vertically, frontal or sideways.

However, later on, male Pugree became of appropriate size.

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Sunga Period (185 - 75 BC):

In the Sunga period (185 – 75 BC) one finds great emphasis on the male head-dress called Mauli where the hair itself was often twisted into a braid along with the turban cloth. This twisted braid was then arranged to form a protuberance at the front or the side of the head but never at the center top, as only priests could use this style. Over the turban a band was sometimes used to hold it in place. In addition, decorative elements like a jewelled brooch or a jhalar (fringe) could be attached to the turban or one end folded in pleats and tucked in like a fan.

In this period the females wore a kind of head cover called 'Uttariya' which had beautiful folded look and was tied crosswise but straight unlike the Male headgear which was vertical or sideways. This Uttariya could be worn having at the back. It is interesting to note that beneath the Uttariya skull cap was worn to keep the headdress firm in its place.

Apart from these, it is gathered from archaeological sources that different strata of society donned different kinds of headdresses. For example, the archer of Taxila used to wrap his head with a thin strip of cloth. The attendant of the archer covered his head with ample pieces of cloth which resembled the contemporary headdresses of an artisan or peasant.



Donor_figure_Bharut_female

Donor_Figure_Bharut_male_turban
mauli

Warrior_bharut

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Gupta Period (320 to 550 AD):

In the Gupta period, only royal entourage and high officials, like the chamberlain, ministers, military officers and civic officials wore turban. It had become a distinctive symbol of their respective ranks. It could be of fine muslin tied over a large knot of hair at the centre of the forehead or a striped turban worn flat and twisted giving a rope-like effect to the cloth when wound. The ministers were often Brahmins with their hair shorn keeping only the ritual top knot.

- By 11th century, even the common people started wearing turban.



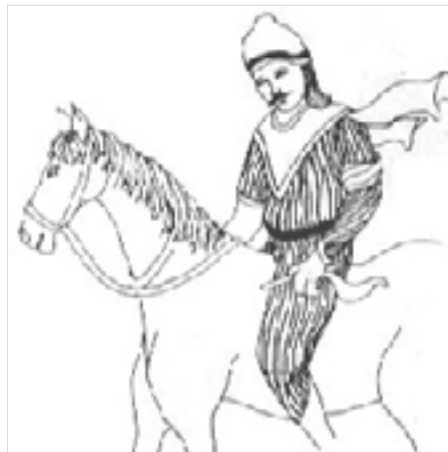
Attendant



Chamberlain



Guard



Horseman



Prince



Votary_figure

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Islamic Era (12th to 17th Century):

The Islamic era brought about several changes in the head-dress in India. Muslims brought their own form of turban which was stylized after Persian / Arabian culture. According to Jamila Brij Bhushan in the Muslim period 'The caps worn were of many shapes pointed with a boss at the tip, conical with broad, upturned brim, triangular or pointed. Sometimes it was a down shape with seams visible in the middle. Akbar gave immense importance to turban. It is said that he even changed his turban style from Mughlai to Hindustani, which encouraged a lot of Hindus to wear turban.

'About the Mughal emperor Jahangir Francois Bernier noted that 'The turban of gold cloth, had an airgrette (sic) whose base was composed of diamonds of an extra ordinary size and value, besides an oriental topaz which may be pronounced unparalleled exhibiting lusture like Sun'. For commoners, we find a reference of a Pugree known as 'Kaj Kulah (One who wears his cap awry). Amir Khushru wrote that the dandies of Delhi wore the type of caps which were 'short turban and oblique caps'. Another poet, Mir Tazi Mir, wrote that this 'Kaj Kulah' was donned by people of older age as if to hold on to their youthfulness.'

- By Dr. Gautam Chatterjee, Pugree-Head Dress Heritage of India.

In the 17th century one Kashmiri Hindu courtesan obtained from the king the grant of a turban one hundred yards long for his son's marriage. Perhaps from this time Kashmiri Hindus started sporting long turbans with pride on such occasions. This practice was later passed on to Rajasthan and Punjab where also long turbans were worn especially during festive occasions.

However, later on Aurangzeb (17th century) tried to suppress the custom of wearing of turban by non-Muslim population. His logic was that only the ruling class (Muslims) had the privilege of wearing turban as a mark of social superiority and authority and since non-Muslims (mainly Hindus) were ruled class, they were to be considered socially inferior and therefore, they could not wear turban. Thus, the Hindus submitted to the above diktat of the Muslim rulers and discarded their own sacred heritage and honour of wearing turban.

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Akbar



Aurangzeb



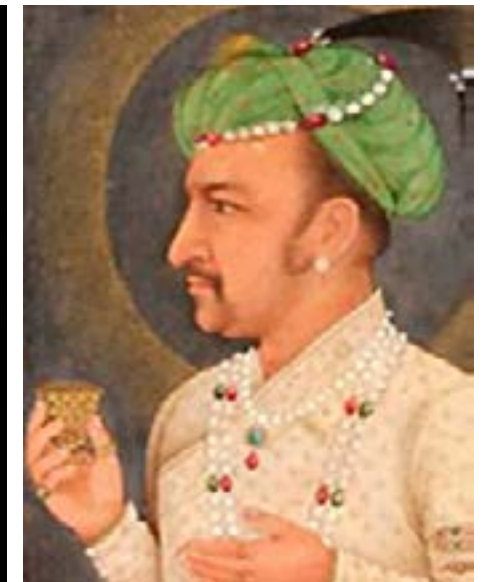
Babur



Bhadur shah - Last mughal emperor of india



Humayun



Jahangir

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Shahjahan

The Sikh Intervention:

In spite of such a ban the Sikhs in particular and strong-minded Hindus like Rajputs, Jats and Marathas refused to accept the authority of the Muslim rulers and they fought with great valour to maintain the glorious heritage, pride and honour of India i.e. Turban/Pugree. Particularly the Sikhs in Punjab - who mostly came from the Hindu families – had to bear untold and most inhuman atrocities to save the heritage and honour of the Hindu religion and the custom of wearing turban /Pugree.

In this process – the ninth guru of the Sikhs – Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji sacrificed his life in Delhi to save the “Tilak” and “Janjhu” – the hallmarks of the Hindu religion. It was a unique martyrdom of Shri Guru Tegh Bahadur, who laid down his life for saving the religion of others i.e. Hindu Kashmiri Pandits in spite of the fact that the first Prophet of Sikhs – Guru Nanak Dev Ji – had forbidden the Sikhs to wear ‘Tilak’ and ‘Janjhu’.

Guru Gobind Singhji, gave a fresh definition to Pugree as he augmented the visionary concept of ‘Khalsa’ which was to fight against the Muslims on slaughter and re-establish the lost pride. The Head-dress remains the symbol of pride and the regality of its nature and the pride of the battlefield. With the passage of time, the concept went beyond the ‘Martial’ race called Khalsa and became a vibrant cultural symbol of Sikh which has spread all over the world today. Even Noble Laureate Rabindra Nath Tagore wrote about Sikh Guru that they decided to sacrifice their head than to allow the cutting of their hair.

Source: ‘Pag ate Pag da Sabhiachar’ Book by Jagdev Singh Aulakh. Translated from the original in Punjabi.

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Spiritual and Religious Significance

In this age of reason and rationality it becomes essential to know 'why' and 'how' turban helps in our spiritual evolution. Turbans go way back in history as part of a spiritual practice. In this age of reason and rationality it becomes essential to know 'why' and 'how' turban helps in our spiritual evolution. Turbans go way back in history as part of a spiritual practice.

In case of infants, these bones are still not fused together and at the top of the head - if you observe closely. You will find a 'soft spot' which pulsates in synchronization with the heartbeats. In yogic terms, this spot is referred to as 'Crown Chakra'. Thousands of years ago our seers, sages and spiritual persons (Rishis, Munis and Yogis) discovered that the hair on the top of the head protects the 'crown chakra' from the sun and exposure to various undesirable environmental elements. In addition, the hair acts as antennae, channelling the solar energy and its life force into the body and brain.' By the Kalgidhar Trust/ Society, Preserving Turban.

Thus, spiritual persons (Rishis, Munis and Yogis) would coil or knot their hair at the 'crown chakra' also called the 'solar centre' of the head. This centre is on the top and the front of the head in men (anterior fontanel). Women are said to have two solar centers: One at the anterior fontanel and the other at the posterior fontanel which is at the back of the head. The coiling or knotting of the hair at these solar centers focuses the energy as well as retains the spiritual vibrations throughout the day. This hair knot (known as Jooraa) is traditionally referred to as 'Rishi Knot'. The 'rishi knot' assists in the channelling of energy in meditation i.e. recitation and concentration on the Divine (God). If one cuts off the hair there can be no 'rishi knot'.

Thus, the 10th Sikh Master, Guru Gobind Singh taught followers to keep their hair unshorn, tie them into a knot at the respective centers and keep them covered with turban so that their spiritual progress is further accentuated. The next step after tying a 'rishi knot' is to wrap-cover it with a turban. The pressure of the multiple wraps in the turban keeps the person calm and relaxed and activates the various pressure points on the forehead. The Turban covers the temples which are said to help protect the wearer from the psychic negativity of other people. The pressure of the turban also changes the pattern of blood flow to the brain. These are all reasons that women should also wear turbans. When you tie up your hair and wrap the turban around it, all the parts of your skull are pulled together and supported. You feel clarity and readiness for the day and for what may come to you from the Unknown.

Sikhs believe that God is the Unknown. He is masterful as well as a mystery. Living with an awareness of your God within you and the God outside of you (God in all) is an attitude. Thus, covering your head is an action with the attitude that there is something greater than you know. Your willingness to stand under that greatness of God is expressed by taking the highest, most visible part of you and declaring it as a place that belongs to the Creator. Covering your head is also a declaration of humility, of your surrender to God. Hence, for a Sikh wrapping a turban everyday is a declaration that his head, his mind is dedicated to the Creator. The turban becomes a flag of his consciousness as well as his crown of spiritual royalty. Wearing a turban over uncut hair is an act of consciousness that can give every Sikh the experience of God. This experience is a must for all Khalsa (baptised), men and women.

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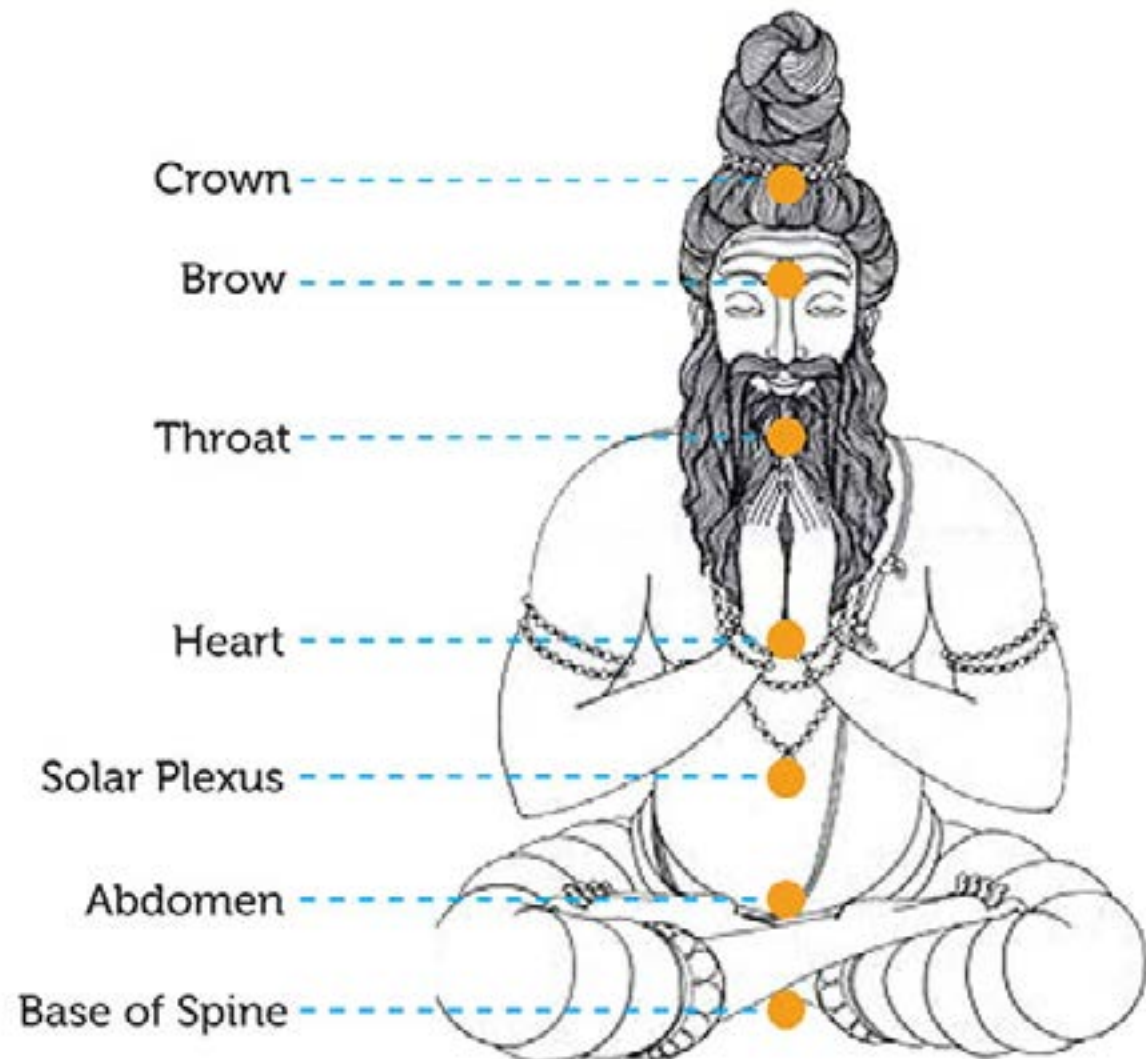
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Seven chakras

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Historical Significance in Sikhism

The turban of a Sikh is a gift given on Bai-Sakhi Day of 1699 by the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh. After giving Amrit to the Five Beloved Ones, he gave Sikhs Bana, the distinctive dress that includes the turban.

During Guru Gobind Singh's time, the turban, or "dastar," as it is called in Persian, carried a totally different connotation from that of a hat in Europe. The turban represented respectability and was a sign of nobility. At that time, a Mughal aristocrat or a Hindu Rajput could be easily distinguished by his turban. The Hindu Rajputs were the only Hindus allowed to wear ornate turbans, carry weapons and have their mustache and beard. Also at this time, only the Rajputs could have Singh ("lion") or Kaur ("princess") as their second name. Even the Gurus did not have Singh as part of their name, until the Tenth Guru.

The downtrodden followers of the Sikh faith did not have the means to display aristocratic attire, nor were they allowed to, even if they had the means. (Doing so was usually equivalent to a death sentence.) It was in this context that Guru Gobind Singh decided to turn the tables on the ruling aristocracy by commanding every Sikh to carry a sword, take up the name Singh or Kaur, and have kesh (hair) and turban displayed boldly, without any fear. This effectively made his followers see themselves as on par with the Mughal rulers.



The first batch of 5 beloved ones received the rites of the two-edged sword from Guru Gobind Singh. (Image Source)

Source: 'Pag ate Pag da Sabhiachar' Book by Jagdev Singh Aulakh. Translated from the original in Punjabi.

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Sikh Turbans

The Identity of Sikh Community

by

Parul Bhatti

IDC, IIT Bombay

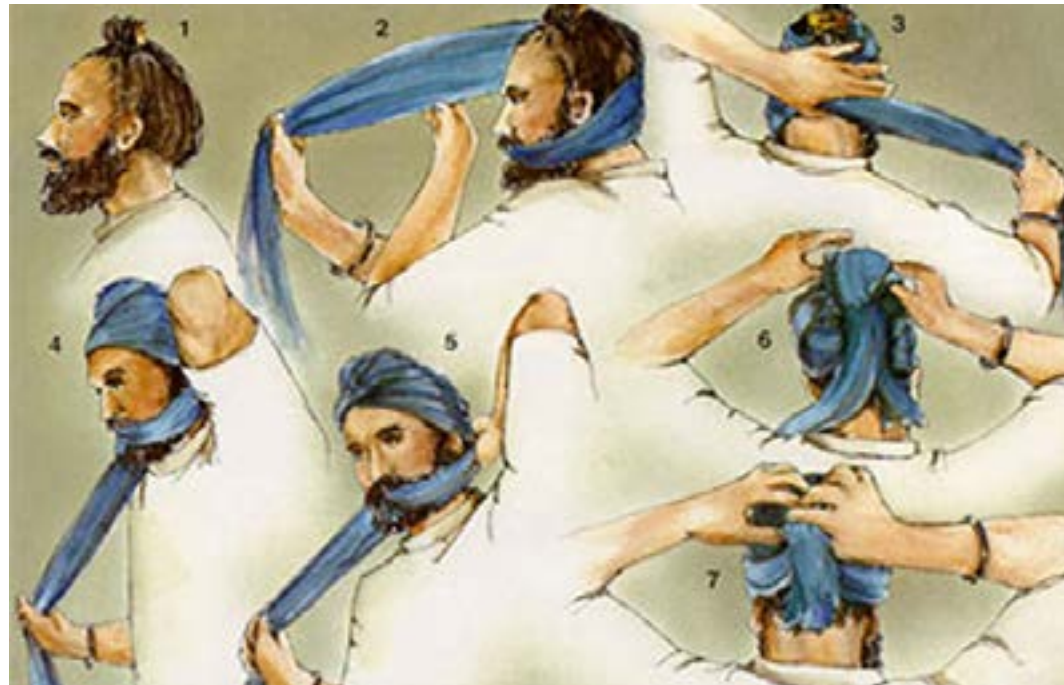
Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/sikh-turbans/process-turban-tying>

Process of Turban Tying

A band of cloth called Fifty is tied on the forehead, before tying the turban. The turban cloth is sprinkled with water so that the cloth sticks nicely when it is wrapped around the head. One corner of the turban is tied to the door knob or handle and is stretched with the hand from the diagonally opposite corner. Both the free ends are then rolled in, making the turban heavier in the middle and lighter at the held corners. The cloth is then folded into 5-6 parts. The knot at the door knob or handle is untied and the folded cloth is held in arms.

Then one corner is held between the teeth while bringing the other end behind and over the top of the head diagonally. The cloth is wrapped smoothly at an angle around the head. After the second loop, the fabric is carefully twisted on one side, bringing it down from the forehead and around, creating a ridge. This twist is repeated on every other turn so that the fabric crosses in front, working its way up. After several turns (about six times for an adult), the end is tucked in under the top of the turban; secured with pins. The remaining end is pulled (the one held in the teeth) underneath the front of the turban to cover the back of the head. The end is tucked into the back of the turban, and is secured with pins.



Steps to tie a regular Punjabi Turban

(Image Source)

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Types of Turban



Army-Sikh Light Infantry regiment.

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Army



Army



Bhangra Turban



Bhangra Turban



Folk Singers Turban



Folk Singers Turban

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Folk Singer's Turban



Harkishan Singh's turban



HS Hanspal's turban



Namdhari Turban



Namdhari Turban



Nath Turban

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Navy



Nihang Turban



Nihang Turban



Punjab Police Turban



Sportsman Turban



Sportsman Turban

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Udasin Turban



Women's Turban

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/sikh-turbans/material-and-size-turban>

Material and Size of Turban

Turbans are 5m (length) x 1m (standard width). Length can vary from 5 to 8 meters, depending upon the kind of Turban one wants to wear. There are some exceptions where some people like Nihang Singh may go with Turbans as long as 10 meters or more. High School children normally wear 4 to 5 meters long turban. Small children wear Patka which is available in the following four sizes:

- Extra Small (18 inches X 18 inches)
- Small (21 inches X 21 inches)
- Medium (24 inches X 24 inches)
- Large (27 inches X 27 inches)

Sikh Turbans are made of semitransparent cotton fabric. Rubia Fine is a light, manageable, strong 100% cotton material with a weave density that enables easy tying of a neat turban with fewer creases. Mulmul, also 100% cotton, has a less dense weave than Rubia Fine, resulting in a lighter turban. It is often used by Sikhs who prefer to starch their turban material.

Therefore, we recommend washing your new material before use. Please wash by hand, using lukewarm water and a gentle laundry detergent.

Source: Author

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Source:

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Turban and Sikh Ceremonies

Dastar Bandhi:

A very important and exciting event in the life of a Sikh boy is when he starts tying the turban. In a Sikh family this ceremony is held normally when the boy is between 11 to 16 years old. It is usually held in a Gurudwara before the Guru Granth Sahib and following Ardas. It is called Dastar Bandi. Sometimes the family will have a special function inviting close friends and relatives to celebrate the occasion. The boy is seated in front of Guru Granth Sahib. An elder relation ties the turban on his head. The Granthi (the reader of Guru Granth Sahib) explains to the boy why he must keep long hair and wear a turban. Prayers are said to invoke Guru's blessing on the boy. The turban tied in this ceremony can be of any color; however baby pink is the most popular of all these days.



(Image Source)

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Sehra Bandhi:

In Sikhs, the wedding happens during the day. On the same day, a custom called Sehra Bandhi is performed at the groom's house before he leaves for Gurudwara for the wedding. During this the sisters of the groom ties 'Kalgi' (turban accessory) on his turban. This custom is derived from Hindu and Muslim weddings where 'Sehra'- a flowery veil is tied on the groom's head to cover his face. However, in most Sikh weddings today the groom wears the veil along with the traditional 'Kalgi' on his turban.



(Image Source)

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Rasam Pagri or Rasam Dastar or Bhog:

It is a ceremony conducted upon the death of the oldest male member in a family, in which the oldest surviving male member of the family is presented with a turban and declared the new head of the family in the presence of the extended family or clan. The turban signifies honour, and the ceremony signifies the transition of responsibility for the protection and welfare of the family from the deceased to the surviving oldest male member. The ceremony usually takes place on the 10th day from the day of funeral rites.

Source: Author

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/sikh-turbans/turban-and-sikh-ceremonies>

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Turban Accessories

Fifty:

A Fifty is a small band of cloth worn on the forehead. Once the turban is tied, this piece of cloth becomes visible in the form of a triangle which helps align the turban symmetrically. It also keeps the hair bun tightly in place and protects the turban from oiled hair. The origin of Fifty traces back to the British rule in India, when the Sikhs in the British army were permitted to wear their turbans. They started the trend of wearing a mini turban (2.5 meters long) below the main turban (5 meters long) and as the mini turban was 50% of the cloth size of the main turban hence it was named Fifty. In today's time, Sikhs wear a small band of cloth to cover their forehead only, instead of covering their head with the mini turban.



(Image Source)

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Thata:

A Thata or Thada is a small band of cloth worn by Sikh men around their beards to hold them in place. It is usually worn in the morning for 20-30 mins to set the beard for the entire day.

Salai or Baaj:

Baaj is a 10 cm long hairpin used to secure loose or short dreads from popping out of the turban and also, to straighten the drapes (Ladh) of the turban. The pin is then inserted into the drapes, kept concealed and is taken out only if there's a need to fix up the turban.



(Image Source)

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Beard Pins:

These are used to keep the hair of the beard in place.



(Image Source)

Beard Rubber Bands:

These are used to tie the beard into a bun.



(Image Source)

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Kalgi:

A metal badge, consisting of a single feather or a cluster of feathers with a vertical pin for insertion at the crest of the turban is worn as an ornament. At times Kalgi is amalgamated with string of pearls. Historically, Kalgi was usually reserved for Rajas (Princes) and Maharajas. Sikh Gurus are often depicted in paintings and drawings with Kalgis. Today, it has become a fashion item, most often seen in Sikh weddings. These days Kalgis are commonly made of plastic.

Gota:

Gota or ribbons are sewn onto turban worn during weddings and festivals. They are used to highlight the edges of the turbans. Mostly used in silver or gold color, this style was made popular by Daler Mehndi – a famous Punjabi Pop singer in the 90's.

Daggers and Knives:

Draggers and Knives of various sizes are worn by Nihangs on their turban.

Iron Chains:

Iron Chains are used to wind around the Nihang turbans to hold draggers, knives and Khanda in place.

Khanda:

The Sikh coat of arms, or “Khalsa Crest,” is commonly called the Khanda. It refers to a double-edged sword in the center of the emblem. Khanda, in the form of a pin, is worn on a turban, especially by Nihangs.

The Cirlet or Chakar:

The cirlet is a throwing weapon used in battle. It is sometimes worn on the turbans of Nihangs.

Source: Author

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Significance of Color in Sikh Turbans

The Turban cloth comes in every possible color and pattern, however there are three most commonly worn colors which are - white, deep blue, and saffron orange. Nowadays most men and women tend to coordinate the color of the turban with their outfits and vice versa. The patterned turban has become a case of fashion, especially with the Sikhs living in metropolitan cities in India.

Culturally, there are some commonly regarded color preferences for certain occasions, which are as follows:

- Saffron is associated with valour and is worn during rallies.
- White is associated with peace and is worn by elders. Many Sikh men and women choose to don a White, Off-White or a similar shade daily as part of their beliefs in keeping with the faith.

It is also a common color worn by Eastern Sikhs at events such as a funeral ceremony or any event where a bright color would not be considered appropriate. On the other hand, Western Sikhs commonly wear White as part of their daily Sikh garb. White turbans are worn to extend the aura and the person's projection.

- Pink and Red are associated with spring and are worn during that season or for marriage ceremonies.
- Orange and Navy Blue are traditional Sikh Khalsa colors, also worn on days of religious observance or special commemorative events. Blue is the color of the warrior and of protection. Royal blue or navy blue turbans are common among Sikh ministers and Gyanis, especially in India. Orange represents wisdom.
- Black and Navy Blue are more popular with the younger generation and also worn at more formal events.
- Black turbans are believed to represent the surrender of the ego.
- Camouflage pattern is worn by military personnel.

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Punjabi Proverbs on Sikh Turbans

There are many Punjabi idioms and proverbs that describe how important is a turban in a Sikh's life.

Pagri Ko Daag Lagana:

- Literal Translation: To put a blemish on one's turban.
- Meaning: To dishonour or disrespect.

Pagh Payron Te Rulna:

- Literal Translation: To drag a turban below one's feet.
- Meaning: To put one's honour in the dust.

Pagh Nu Hath Lana:

- Literal Translation: To touch one's turban.
- Meaning: To dishonour or disrespect.

Pagh Sir Te Rakhna:

- Literal Translation: To put the turban on the head.
- Meaning: To honour someone with responsibility.

Pagh De Shaan Rakhna:

- Literal Translation & Meaning: To keep the honour of the turban.

Pag Vatauni:

- Literal Translation: To exchange turbans.
- Meaning: A Punjabi custom where people exchange turbans as a mark of friendship. Once they exchange turbans they become friends for life and forge a permanent relationship.

Source: Author

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Initiatives to Save Sikh Turbans

Turban, among Sikhs; is becoming an attire worn during special occasions only. The Sikh community fears that the art of tying a turban will soon die out.

Three hundred years ago, devout Sikh men and women were urged to demonstrate their commitment by not cutting their hair and by carrying a sword, comb and bracelet. They were given the name “Singh,” which means lion in Hindi, as a mark of common brotherhood that eliminates caste distinctions.

With the decline in turban wearers, the community is thinking up ways to draw young people back to the tradition.

A group called Akal Purakh Ki Fauj, or the Army of the Timeless Being, organizes the annual Turban Pride Day in April, sends volunteers to schools to teach turban-tying and has introduced a software program called the Smart Turban that helps people pick a style that suits them.

Since 2005, the group has held the Mr. Singh International pageant for turbaned Sikhs. Among other talents, contestants must demonstrate their turban-tying skills.

A good no. of turban training centers has opened up in various cities in Punjab and Delhi. These centers have become popular among youth who visit these centers to get their turbans tied neatly for special occasions like marriage and some other festivities where they are required to look good.

Also, a lot of them feel that nobody in their family has time and patience to teach them how to tie a turban. Few states that their parents themselves cannot tie a good turban hence they are compelled to go to turban training centers to learn it.

Quite a few Gurudwara committees both in Punjab and outside India have been trying to promote Gursikhi-focused events - one of them being turban tying competition, especially during the time of Vaisakhi Mela. This becomes a light-hearted take on the judging criteria with the intention to inspire Sikhs to wear their turbans with pride.

Recently, an App with the name Turbanizer was launched for iPhones and iPad. It allows one to try on over 50 different styles of turbans in photos taken from the camera or from Facebook. The output of which can be shared via email, Twitter or Facebook.

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Mr. Ash Singh, creator of the App wanted non-Turban wearers to visualize themselves in a Turban so as to help break the stigma associated with it. He terms it as an initiative to make the turban a mainstream fashion wear.

Apart from this, there have been several Feature Films, Documentaries and exhibitions to promote the Sikh culture of wearing Turbans.



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- Documentary, 'Roots of Love' (2011) - By Harjant Gill
- 'Ocean of Pearls' (2008) - By Sarab Neelam

Books:

- 'Pag ate Pag da Sabhiachar' - By Jagdev Singh Aulakh, written in Punjabi Language

Websites:

- www.sikhnet.com
- www.sikhiwiki.org
- www.sikhcoalition.org
- sikhturbanday.org
- www.gosikh.com
- www.sikharcives.com

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Design Resource

Sikh Turbans

The Identity of Sikh Community

by

Parul Bhatti

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

[https://dsource.in/resource/sikh-turbans/
contact-details](https://dsource.in/resource/sikh-turbans/contact-details)

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