

# Rajasthani traditional headgear: Protection to sophistication

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Rajasthan is very popular in all over the world for its cultural diversity, tradition and antique handicraft. Rajasthani costumes show its own uniqueness, out of which headgear, traditional male costume is a great identification mark of belongingness from Rajasthan. This paper deals with the protection and utilization of turban and socio-cultural significance of headgear. The headgear used in Rajasthan to protect the head from extraordinary climatic condition as well as it plays an important role in identify culture, caste, religion and belongingness. It is the symbol of status. It was the most important part of nobleman's costume and their courtier. Most of the Rajasthani community are very much attached to this attire as their social and cultural heritage.

■ **KEY WORDS**: Handicraft, Jewelleary, Rajasthani costumes, Block printing

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Rajasthan is often called the shoppers “paradise” as it is famous for textiles, semi-precious stones and handicrafts. The attractive design of jewellery and cloths are eye catching and inviting to any shopper. Rajasthani costumes are always in demand whenever sold. Costumes are often made from textiles using either block printing and tie and dye techniques. The rituals of Rajasthan provide the sense of belongingness through costumes and language. The people of Rajasthan are fond of colourful clothes and ornaments.

Soaked in the brightness and playfulness of hues like yellows and reds, the pagri is a prestigious part of dress for the people of Rajasthan. Every turban or pagri, however, has a certain significance attached to it. It is indicative of the stature to which the person who wears

it– something that the color and the style of the turban are reflective of (<https://www.utsavpedia.com/attires/haute-couture-from-the-lands-of-rajasthan/>).

Headgears worn in Rajasthan are referred to as the *Pagari and Safa*. They vary in style, colour and size. They also indicate a wearer's social class, caste, region and the occasion it being worn for. Its shape and size may also vary with the climatic conditions of the different regions.

Prominent styles are *Pencha, Sela* and *Safa*, although several local variants exist. A conventional *Pagari* is usually 82 inches long and 8 inches wide. A *Safa* is shorter and broader. Ordinarily a turban of a single colour is worn. However, turbans of one of more colours may be worn by the elite or during special

occasions such as festivals or weddings, etc. Rajasthani turbans are a prominent tourist attraction. Tourists are often encouraged to participate in turban-tying competitions.

On the basis of extraordinary history, various historians, philosophers and researchers discussed various aspects of Rajasthani turban *i.e.* protection and utilization through headgear and socio-cultural significance of headgear. The researcher thoroughly reviewed the opinion of all the experts and want to show the interest to compile all the aspects reported by various experts which has been in this paper.

### **Protection and utilization of headgear:**

Head-dresses of different types are known by different names such as pagari, safa, mandil, shamla or addha. Topi or cap, though formal head –dress for a grown up man is not seen till 17-18<sup>th</sup> centuries and was much in use in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Pagaris dyed in one colour whereas safa dyed in muticolours used by all classes of the society for daily use but tie-dyed pagaris with Laheriya, mothra and chunari patterns are used on special occasions.

Nagar (2003) reported various types of turbans ('Pag-pagriyan') worn by male of different communities in Rajasthan. He reported about 'Kantopa' made up of silk cloth with 'Jari' filled with cartoon was born by Maharaja Jaswant Singh (1638-78E). This 'Kantopa' used to cover neck and ears during winter season.

Various cast and communities are found in Mewar and Marwar region but rajput community has its own identity. Attire of Rajput's of both the region is different. Headgear is the one of the most important part of men's costume in Rajasthan. It comprises a unique significance to Rajasthani men as it is a symbol of the region and caste from where the individual belongs. Headgears can be found in different colours, shapes and sizes. Additionally, special types of headgears are designed during big events and festivals. People living in Mewar are habitual of tyeing a flat Pagri over their head, while Marwari men like to wear Safa having curved bands (Gosain, 2013).

Godara *et al.* (2016) reported that in Rajasthan, originally people started to wear a turban like cloth to keep their head cool. The cloth was kept soaked in water overnight and tied in morning. It was a way of escaping from the harsh and scorching heat of sun in the hot climate

of desert. The practice of wearing a turban or a cloth headgear originated to insulate oneself from the scorching sun. Air trapped within the cloth fabric acts an insulator of heat. Hence the greater number of fabric loops in the headgear helped in insulating and casting a shadow over the face which walking in the sun it also doubled as a cushion when carrying load on the head.

Turbans in the hot desert areas are large and loose. Farmers and shepherds, who need constant protection from the elements of nature, wear some of the biggest turbans. The Rajasthani turban also has many practical functions. Exhausted travelers use it as a pillow, a blanket or a towel. It can be used to strain muddy water. Their size varies according to the exposure to environment, shepherds have large turbans. It protects the head from any injury, sand and heat. It might be used as a rope (untied turban is really long) for tying anything or for fetching water from a well (as people in desert used to travel a lot according to seasons).

According to Reality Premedia Services Pvt. Ltd. (2019) significance of turban is that it is essentially protecting against the strong sun, it is a symbol of a man's honour. Knocked over it implies an insult, placed at man's feet it represents surrender, an exchange means brotherhood, when a man carries a turban in his hand to present to women, it tells about her husband's death.

### **Socio cultural significance of headgear:**

The golden pages of history, which showcase the emergence of this cultural attire traces back to 7<sup>th</sup> century that defined the rule of the Rajputs. It was during their era, when these turbans were intrinsically patterned and weaved with the finest threads of cotton and silk, and were patronized and promoted as a symbol of status and identity. The Rajput Kings sported this traditional turban in different colours and styles in accordance with the occasions in the majestic court.

There's an unending plethora of turbans that are worn by people across Rajasthan. At times, the colour of the pagri varies according to the season. Falgunia turbans having white and red designs are sported during spring season, whereas in the month of July, the prominent colour is 'motiya' or pearl pink. A green and pink striped or yellow and red striped turban in Lehariya prints, is worn in the monsoon. Zalani (2003) found that the wearing of pagri, *Patka*, *Payjama*, is of great significance of Rajasthani man. These costumes were

adopted by muslims after some alteration and changing in pattern. In Rajasthan the style of wearing of cloths is the different so they can be recognized (<https://www.utsavpedia.com/attires/pagri-the-pride-of-marwar/>).

Bhandari (2004) reported two most commonly worn headgear (turban) the 'Pagari' and 'Safa' of men in Rajasthan. Turbans were dyed either in one colour or with the resist technique. Tie and dye produced designs reported were 'Laheriya', 'Mothra' and 'chunari' pattern. Special designs like 'Pachranga' (five colour), 'Gandhar' (diagonal zigzag pattern) and 'Rajasthani' (used by king) for different occasion and usually for royalty.

Mathur (2004) reported about costumes of the Rulers of Mewar. Her study revealed that the traditional tie-dye fabrics are given the same importance today as was given a few centuries ago. Turbans, waist bands, upper garments and some other items of wearing apparels were made of a variety of tie-dye fabrics like dot tie-dye, stripes and plaids. Fabrics used for various dress items were decorated by block printings and were also adorn by means of gold and silver embroidery. Different style were used for coiling the pagdi (head wear).

Dwivedi (2008) revealed that traditionally the bridegroom wears saffron coloured turban at the time of his engagement and marriage in rajput community. The colour of "Kurta", "Dhoti" or "Payjama" of groom noted is either white (10.00%) or pink (90.00%). Wearing of pink coloured "Dhoti" by groom was found maximum (93.33%) and minimum (86.67%) in Shergarh and Jodhpur tehsil, respectively. The traditional dress worn by the bridegroom is known as "Beend-bhaga". Sarpatti, Sar-pench and Turraare used as a ornaments used with headgear.

Srivastava and Kaur (2010) reported about different colours of Pagri commonly used by young adults and old people among Suryavansi Rajputs. In Udaipur, 25 per cent, 23.33 per cent, and 20 per cent, Rajput families liked to wear mahroon, red and yellow coloured pagri, while 16.66 per cent and 15 per cent people liked Laheriya and orange coloured pagri, respectively.

Dunkwal and Bishnoi (2014) reviewed and reported that Bhil, Meena, Garasia, Damor, Saharia and Kathodi tribe communities are living in Rajasthan. According to the author all the communities use to wear different costumes but only Bhil and Saharia community's male

used head gear Bhil's head gear known as 'Feta' whereas male of Saharia community used 'Turban'.

Godara *et al.* (2016) discussed the socio cultural aspect of turban and said that in Later on it go on becoming the symbol of status. Even pagdi or turban inspired lyricists to write patriotic songs, especially in the pre independence days. The elders of a family often advise their children to safeguard their turban. The style of turban changes every 15 km. their styles of wearing and easy to identify an individual's caste, creed, religion, region based on his "Paag", and "Style of wrapping" like A Rebari Man wears entangled huge *turban*, Bishnois usually wear white turban, Khaki turban is Usually for a condolence visit, *Mewari turban*, Sanyasis used Orche colored and Weeding Safa and people of Rajput community wears *Panchrangi safra*. It becomes a colourful and vibrant part of their daily attire. It is a common site in villages of Rajasthan when people are seen in vibrant and huge complicated turbans. Turban orginated in the Rajput families where it was a ritual for men to wear at any special occasion. Even children were also sported with colourful turbans.

The author further said that after the death of family head, a function known as Pagari rasam is held in which the eldest son wears the Pagari and takes over the responsibility as the new family head. There is a custom of exchange of Pagari between two families as a symbol of close friendship. If turban carried by a man by his hand and presented to woman, means death of her husband. Turban once knocked over means insult to the person and if some ones turban is placed at other mans feet mean complete surrender. On the occasion of daughter wedding it is an honor to present the turbans to brides in law family members. Plain and muted colour turbans are used during a period of mourning.

According to Shukla and Gupta (2017), in the medieval period, Sarpench was also used in the Vrindavan of Shri Vighra in the Radharman Vaishnava temple in the Vrindavan region of North India. At present, there is a lot of use of Sarpanch, which is a royal style on the veranda of the bride, along with the temples as well as on the wedding marriages. Presently its advertisement in the online market also reflected its popularity. In this way Sarpench is popular among the people of the temple, from temples to the common people. We can say that the royal style of Sarpench has kept its popularity from medieval to the present.

Rabari men generally wear complete white attire. Men wear *Dhoti* and on the top, a short double breasted waist coat (all white) laced over the chest and tied, with long sleeves and a white turban. On festive occasions, they wear red turbans embellished with 'Gota' work. The men wear the 'Murki' in their ears and also the 'Jhela' (Anonymous, 2017).

Singh (2016) reported that the turban is, worn by people all over the world, but only a few cultures preserve the age-old traditions, especially those who are untouched by the modernization or westernization, even Europeans wore caps and hats. In Rajasthan and India, the turban served many purposes, such as, under cultural significance, it was considered a person's head, a person would lose his head rather than someone else taking his turban off his head. The wearing styles are simply regional cultural differences to show or make others understand that one belonged to a particular region and culture. Spiritual significance: from the old times, the back of the head, called "Shikha" is considered to hold down the acquired information and knowledge, in spiritual practices or ancient beliefs the turban was worn to protect one's energy. Also, it made hard to read a person's mind or energy. Social significance: socially, it was considered very rude to appear with your head not covered, especially in front of one's elders. And seeing a person with bare head considered to be an ill omen.

Reality Premedia Services Pvt. Ltd. (2019) observed that the Rajasthani Turban has a special place in the ritualistic life of the people. Called Safa, Paag or pagri, it is a piece of cloth averagely nine metres long, but some are even longer. Turbans depict region, caste and religion of the man, through the style of the turban worn. The shepherd community had would be recognized by the multi-coloured turbans they wear, while the Bhisnoi community by their white turbans. There are 1000 ways to wear a turban. Some of them are -"Jallori" from Jalore, "Bhatti" from Jaisalmer, "Shahi Jodhpuri paag" or the royal turban, the Jaisalmer merchants "paagri", the "Banswara paag", "Jaipuri turban" from Jaipur, the "Alwar" turban, "Sirohi" turban.

Now-a-days the Jodhpuri "safa" has become the most common headgear all over country. The "Durbari paag" of Dholpur was to be worn while attending the royal durbar or court. Saffron is considered the most sacred colour and is worn to weddings. Other colours such as red, magenta, are also worn. Dark blue, black,

khaki are worn during the period of mourning.

### Conclusion:

The headgear plays an important role in protection, maintain prestige, sophistication and symbol of honor. The people of Rajasthan have always believed in preserving traditions. Due to advancement of technology, the pagri's of Rajasthan is becoming increasingly popular among masses and even people of other communities are preferring Marwari turban on social and festive occasions like during marriages, birth ceremonies. Similarly, light, sober and dull shades of colours are worn for the prayer meetings of deceased people. It can be concluded that pagri or turban now-a-days has become an integral part of the socio cultural heritage of India and its popularity is expanding day by day.

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