Name of The Element: Practice of turban tying in Rajasthan

Community/ies: This tradition in the state of Rajasthan is practised by most communities of the Hindu religion. Besides, there are Muslim communities like Langa, Manganyar, Sindhi, Qayamkhani, Rangrej; and also the Sikh community resident in this state, who are bearers of this tradition. Among the Hindus, this is a ubiquitous tradition; some of the names of communities are: Rajput, Charan, Bhaat, Bishnoi, Jasnathi, Jaat, Raika (Rebari), Kalbelia, Jogi, Ramsnehi, Brahmins, Gujjar, Mahajan, Meena, Bhil, Gawaria, Kamad, Meghwal, Suthar, Naai, Lohar, and Kumhar. This tradition spans across all class, caste and creed divisions.

Region: The tradition of tying turbans is all-pervasive in the state of Rajasthan with none of the 33 districts being an exception. In terms of traditional demarcation of regions, Marwar, Mewar, Dhundhar, Hadoti, Godwad, Shekhawati, Vagad, Bikana, and Mewat are the prime regions where the culture is prevalent.

The tradition of turbans is actually spread in various parts of India, which is why comprehending its history and range is a mammoth task. Amongst the neighbouring areas, the states of Haryana, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat also have strong turban-tying traditions. Besides, Rajasthan also shares border with Pakistan which also has a long tradition of turbans in its eastern parts.

Brief Description : Turban, or safai in local parlance, is a long, generally unstitched cloth, which is tied on the head of men. The cloth could have a plain texture or could be printed in various designs. There are two primary variants: a) safai, which is from 8 to 10 metres in length, and 1 m in width; and b) paag or pagdi, which is around 20 metre in length, and 20 cm in width. Given the immensity of length, it is a complex mechanism of tying a turban, which requires great skill. Each community has its own unique style.

The earliest evidence available is a 2nd century BC statue of the Kushana period of a woman wearing a turban. However, the modern turban is around 300 years old, and is worn now by men only. British ethnographers of the colonial period have recorded the phenomenon vividly.

The turban is a symbol of pride and identity. Also, it has several practical uses – it protects the wearers’ head from extreme temperatures. It can be used as a pillow, as a mattress, or as a rope to draw water from wells, or to carry household wares from the market. Rajasthan is a desert state, and people have compensated for the lack of colour through colourful attires and music, and the myriad hues of turbans are in consonance with that. Whether the context is rural or urban, the turban is ubiquitous and the most visible living tradition of the state.

Photographs

Video

Community Consent

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