

PRESERVING TURBAN

AS THE GLORIOUS HERITAGE, PRIDE and HONOUR of INDIA



Shivaji Maharaj



Maha Rana Pratap



Swami Dayanand



Rani of Jhansi



Prithviraj Chauhan



Swami Vivekananda



Lala Lajpat Rai



Sarvepalli Radha Krishnan



C. V. Raman



Mahatma Gandhi



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Headdress or Pugree, as a concept of costume has come down to us from prehistoric era, it was basically adopted for three purposes, Protection against the vagaries of nature and climate, the need for status enhancement and to keep the honour of one's traditions

Of interest to us are the Vedic references to headdress. (Ushnish i.e. Turban / Pugree). Vedas are considered to be the ultimate source of knowledge and authority in the Hindu Ethos. (See "Call of the Vedas" by A.C. Bose Page 6 . Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1988).

In the Rig Veda we find references to head gears (Ushnish / Pugree) which were usually worn in white colour but during "Yagnya" these were worn in different colours (Research Project by Dr. Gautam Chatterjee on Pugree.)

In the ancient times headdress was referred to as "shirotran" ('shir' means head and 'tran' means protection i.e. head protection) or 'ushnish' meaning Turban / Pugree.

Maitrayani Samita also describes that *ushnish* was worn by king during *Rajasuya* and *Vajaypega* Yagnas. Other ancient names for turban were "*Kirita*" and "*Mauli*" Pictures (Plate 1 to 8) amply illustrate the tradition of Ushnish / Turban / Pugree in the ancient India.

It is rather surprising to find Lord Rama wearing a turban like head gear. Plate 1, displayed in the National Museum New Delhi, shows Lord Rama releasing Ahalya from the curse of Rishi Gautama (she is seen at the feet of Lord Rama, who is blessing her through hand gesture).

Similarly Surya the Sun God is shown wearing a flat turban / pugree – like head gear in Plate – 2 (Kushan period, first century A.D., Government Museum, Mathura) and wearing a crown like head gear in Plate –3 (Konark, Orissa, National Museum, New Delhi)

It should be understood that the head gear, which was simple in the very ancient times, gradually started becoming more elaborate, beautiful and bejeweled, culminating in the shape of a crown to be worn by the various gods, goddesses and kings.

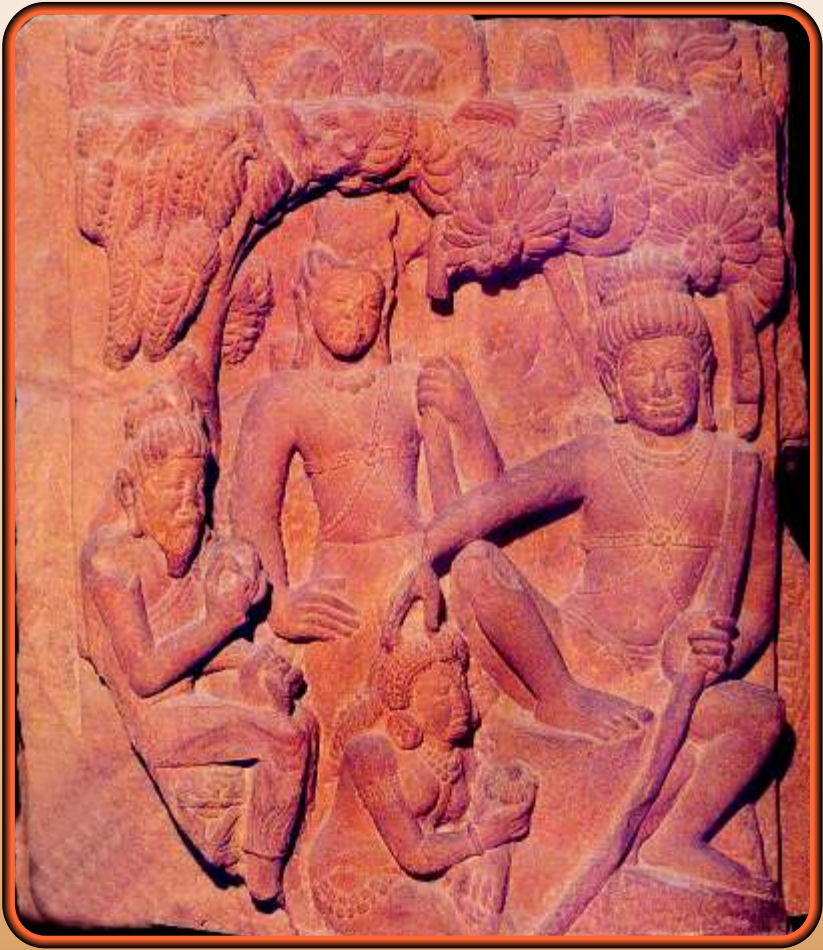


Plate – 1

Rama releases Ahalya from Rishi Gautama's curse.

Gupta period, Sixth century AD, Deogarh,
MadhyaPradesh, National Museum, New Delhi.



Plate – 2
Surya, the Sun God
Kushan Period, first Century A.D., Government Museum,
Mathura.



Plate – 3
Surya, the Sun God
Konarak, Orissa
National Museum, New Delhi.



Plate – 4

Lord Vishnu

Chola 12th Century A.D., Tanjore, Tamilnadu
National Museum, New Delhi.



Plate – 5
Nataraja
Chola 10th Century A.D., Thiruvangulum, Tamilnadu
National Museum, New Delhi.



Plate – 6
Yakshi (Semi Goddess),
Sunga, Second Century B.C., Barut, Madhya Pradesh
Indian Museum, Kolkata.

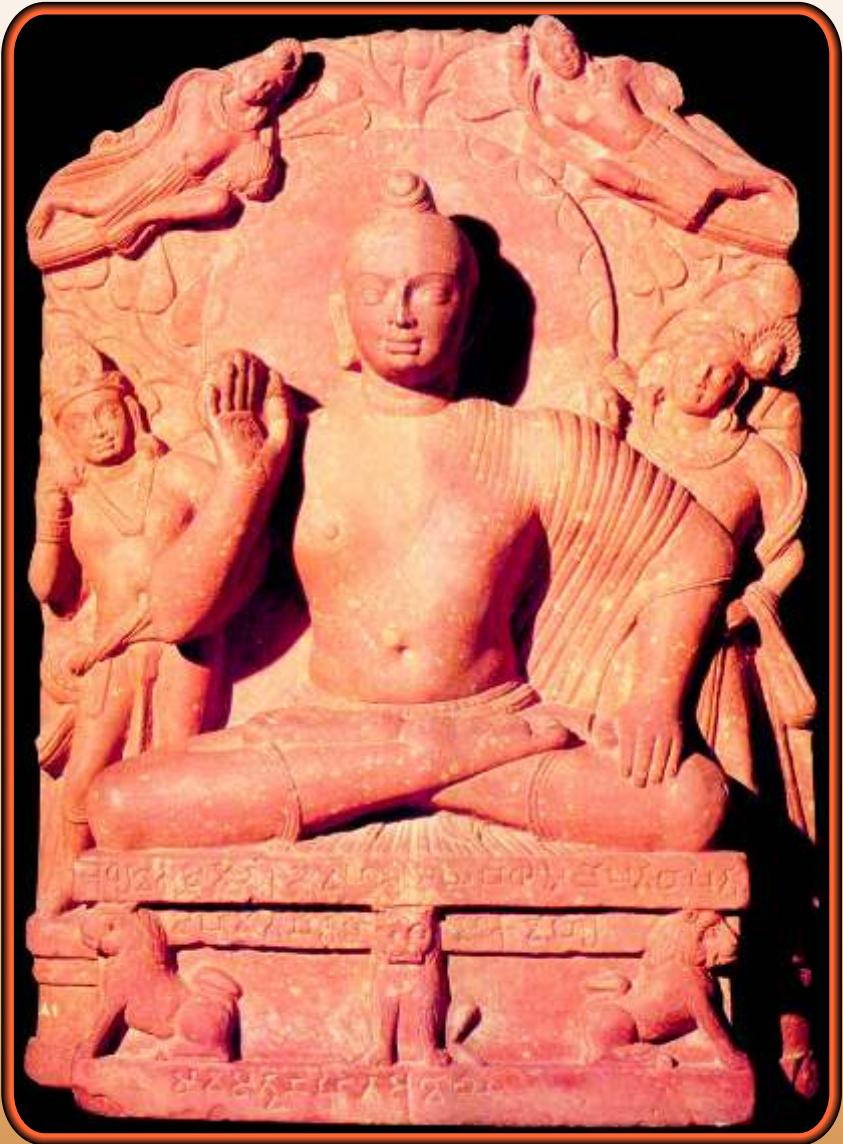


Plate – 7
The seated Budha,
Kushan, 1st – 2nd century A.D., Katra Mound, Mathura,
UttarPradesh
Government Museum, Mathura.

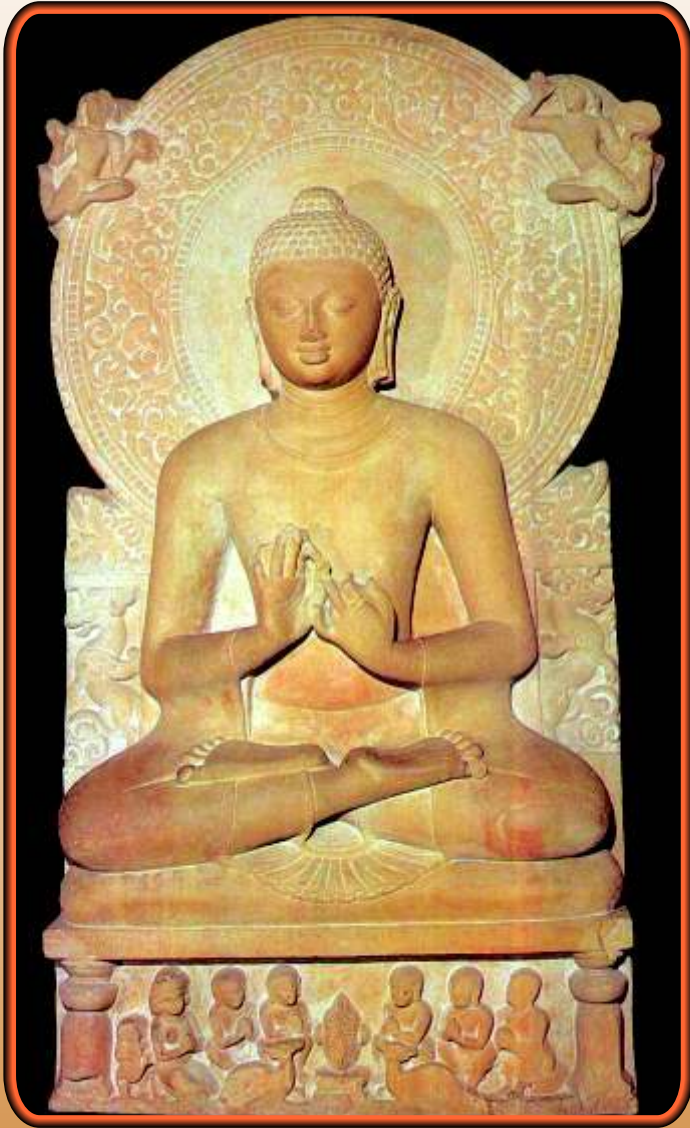


Plate – 8
The Sarnath Budha,
Gupta, 5th Century A.D., Sarnath Uttarpradesh.
Archeological Museum, Sarnath.

In plates 4 & 5 we see Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva of Hindu Pantheon wearing 'Mukat' – Crown, which is just a variation of head dress. It should make our readers thoughtful as to why our gods and goddesses are always shown with covered heads

Even women are shown wearing headgear very similar to the modern day turban as far back as second century B.C. (see Plate 6 of Yakshi - Indian Museum – Kolkata).

In plates 7 and 8 we see Lord Budha with 'Ushnish' or head cover. This was sculptured as far back as first – second century A.D. (Plate – 7) and fifth century (Plate – 8) respectively.

It appears that term "Pugree" was coined around the thirteenth century A.D.

In a contemporary account of Chand Bardai, the poet in the court of the last Hindu king, Prithvi Raj Chauhan, he states that 'Prithvi Raja Wore a Pugree ornamented with jewels (Plate – 9).

The term "Turban" got currency in the 15th – 16th century A.D. wherein it was pronounced as 'Dulband' and its etymology suggests that its meaning was 'head wrap'.



Plate – 9
Prithviraj Chauhan
The last Hindu King

Symbolism associated with Turban

Over a period of time Turban / Pugree has acquired several ceremonial and ritualistic connotations. In the Vedic period the king would rub the feet of the officiating Brahmin with his head gear cloths during the sacrificial session (Yajana) as a mark of symbolic submission to the Brahmins.

In the past and even now a days people are expected to cover their heads as a sign of homage while visiting some of the special temples. Exchange of turbans signifies creation of deep and strong relationship. Trampling of Pugree indicates grave insult. Surrender is symbolized by placing Pugree before somebody's feet. Pugree also symbolizes family succession which is done on the 12th day after the demise of the head of the family – "*Pugree Rasam*".

Colours also have significance in the symbolism of Turban; for instance sporting of *Panchranga Pugree* – saffron, pink, red, yellow and

white – on auspicious occasions.

Bharatiya Vabaher Kosha, edited by Vishvanath Dinkar Narvene, lists out different names for turban in fifteen major Indian languages

Thus in the Hindu period turban served as a symbol of respect of the Hindu ethos in general and particularly the white turban signified purity, spirituality and great respect. But all this changed with the advent of the Muslim Rule.

The Impact of Muslim rule on Pugree (1100 – 1800 A.D)

Ushering in of the Islamic era brought about several changes in the head dress fashion in India.

Firstly Muslims brought their own form of turban which was stylized after Persian / Arabian culture. Secondly they tried to suppress the custom of wearing of turban by non-Muslim population. Their 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. *In short this strategy was aimed at breaking their morale / confidence and breeding in them certain sense of inferiority.*

Thus the weak minded Indians in the Northern India submitted to the above diktat of the Muslim rulers and discarded their own sacred heritage and honour of wearing turban.

Inspite 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 hall marks of the Hindu religion.

See plate no.'s 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40 and 41.

Many Western writers from Europe, England and the American continent have expressed great astonishment at this unique martyrdom of Shri Guru Tegh Bahadur, who laid down his life for saving the religion of others i.e. Hindu Kashmiri Pandits inspite

of the fact that the first Prophet of Sikhs – Guru Nanak Dev Ji – had forbidden the Sikhs to wear ‘*Tilak*’ and ‘*Janjhu*’. Their mind simply cannot comprehend the idea of somebody sacrificing himself for someone else’s religion. *Their best example of sacrifice is that of Jesus Christ who was put on cross by the Romans. But the crucifixion of the Christ was for the Christianity and not for someone else’s religion.*

It is a pity that some of our North Indian brethren carry the impression that the turban is exclusively a Sikh symbol. We have already shown by various vedic and sculptured evidence that the Turban / Pugree is the symbol of ancient Indian honour and heritage. Even Rajputs and Marathas continued to wear turban, defying Muslim kings’ diktat as is borne out by the pictures of Prithvi Raj Chauhan (Plate – 9), Maharana Pratap (Plate – 10), Veer Chhatrasal (Plate – 11), Chhatrapati Shivaji (Plate – 12), Bajirao Peshva (Plate – 13), Rani Channamma of Kittur (Plate – 14), Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi (Plate – 15) and Rani Avantibai of Ramgarh (Plate – 16). Even today many Hindu elders (head of families) continue to wear turban.

Impact of the British Rule

Hardly had the tyranny of Muslim rulers ended, when India was again subjected to further degradation by the British rulers who used monetary inducements, promise of better social status and other enticements to convert Hindus to Christianity.

The socio-cultural encounter with the British produced many great and enlightened Hindu reformers and political leaders who took up the challenge of saving the Hindu Ethos, through religious, social and political movements. These leaders arose on the Indian firmament initially as socio-religious reformers; like Swami Vivekananda of Ram Krishan Mission (Plate – 17), Raja Ram Mohan Roy of Brahmo Samaj (Plate - 18), Swami Dayanand Saraswati of Arya Samaj (Plate –19), Mahatma Hans Raj (Plate – 20), Dharma Veer Pandit Lekh Ram (Plate - 21) and Pandit Bhagwat (Plate - 22). All these Hindu leaders were proud to wear turban as can be seen from their photographs.

On the political front we had brilliant stalwarts like Lala Hardayal (Plate – 23), Bal Gangadhar Tilak (Plate – 24), Lala Lajpat Rai (Plate – 25), Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi - during his younger age (Plate – 26), Jawaharlal Nehru (Plate - 27) and Gopal Krishna Gokhale (Plate - 28) . Even these leaders had turban as part of their dress code.

On the educational, philosophical and scientific fronts we had eminent persons like Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya (Plate – 29), Dr. Sarvepalli Radha Krishnan, the second President of India (Plate – 30), and the Nobel Laureate Sir C.V. Raman (Plate – 31) who chose to maintain the honour and glory of turban in their life.



Plate – 10
Maharana Pratap



Plate – 11
Veer Chhattrasal
(Postage Stamp, Government of India)



Plate – 12
Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj
(Maratha Warrior)
(Postage Stamp, Government of India)

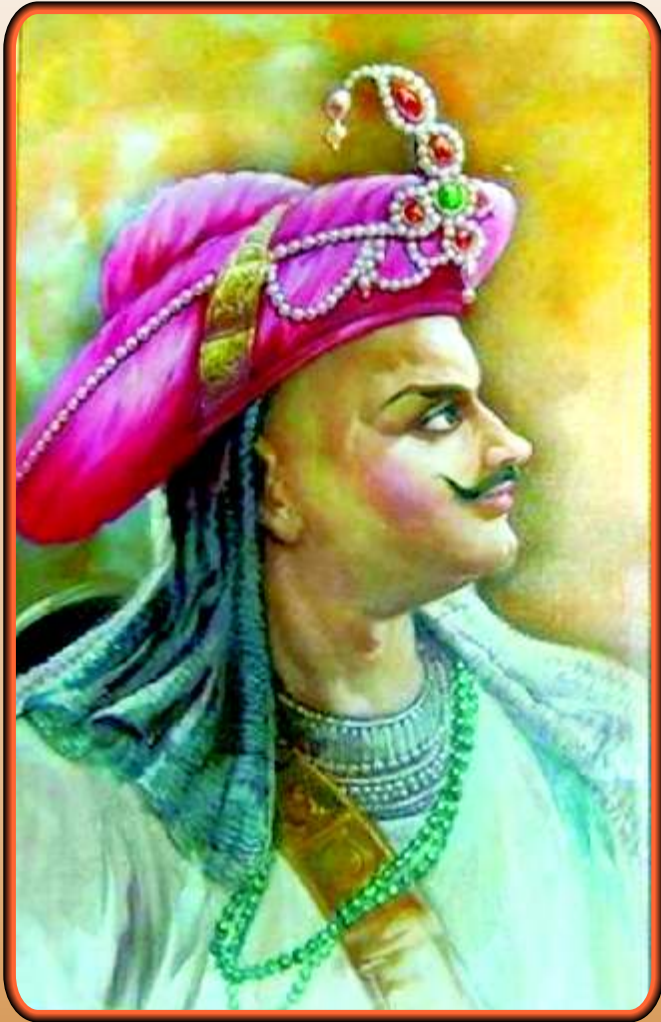


Plate – 13
Bajirao Peshva
(Maratha King)
(Postage Stamp, Government of India)



Plate – 14
Rani Channamma Kittur
(Postage Stamp, Government of India)



Plate – 15
Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi
(Postage Stamp, Government of India)



Plate – 16
Rani Avantibai of Ramgarh
(Postage Stamp, Government of India)



Plate – 17
Swami Vivekananda
of Ram Krishna Mission



Plate – 18
Raja Ram Mohan Roy
of Brahmo Samaj



Plate – 19
Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824 – 1880)



Plate – 20
Mahatma Hansraj (1864 – 1938)
Freedom Fighter



Plate – 21
Dharamveer Pandit Lekhram (1858 – 1897)
Leader of Arya Samaj



Plate – 22
Pandit Bhagwat (1893-1968)
Leader of Arya Samaj



Plate – 23
Lala Har Dayal (Oct 4, 1884 – March 4, 1939)
Freedom Fighter



Plate – 24
Bal Gangadhar Tilak
Freedom Fighter and Political Leader



Plate – 25
Lala Lajpat Rai
Freedom Fighter and Political Leader



Plate – 26
Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi
Father of Nation



Plate – 27
Jawaharlal Nehru
Freedom Fighter and First Prime Minister of India



Plate – 28
Gopal Krishna Gokhale
Freedom Fighter
Statue at Mumbai



Plate – 29
Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya
Freedom Fighter and Distinguished Educationist

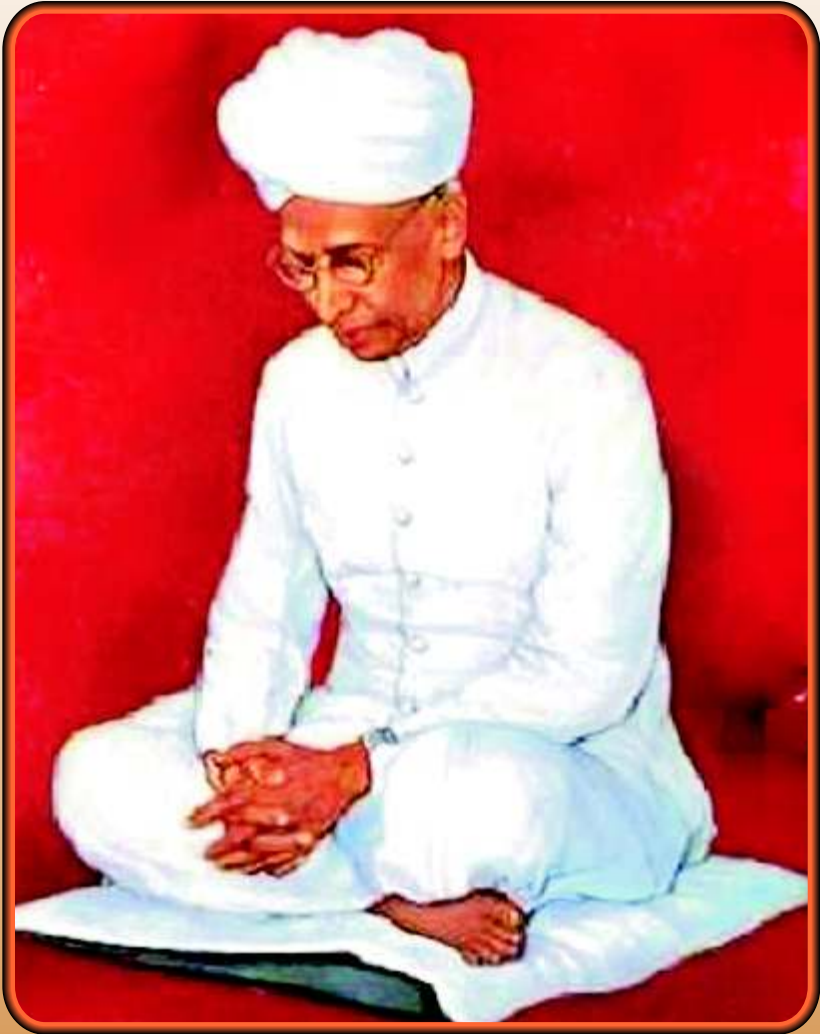


Plate – 30
Dr. Sarvepalli Radha Krishnan
Distinguished Philosophy Scholar and the second
President of India

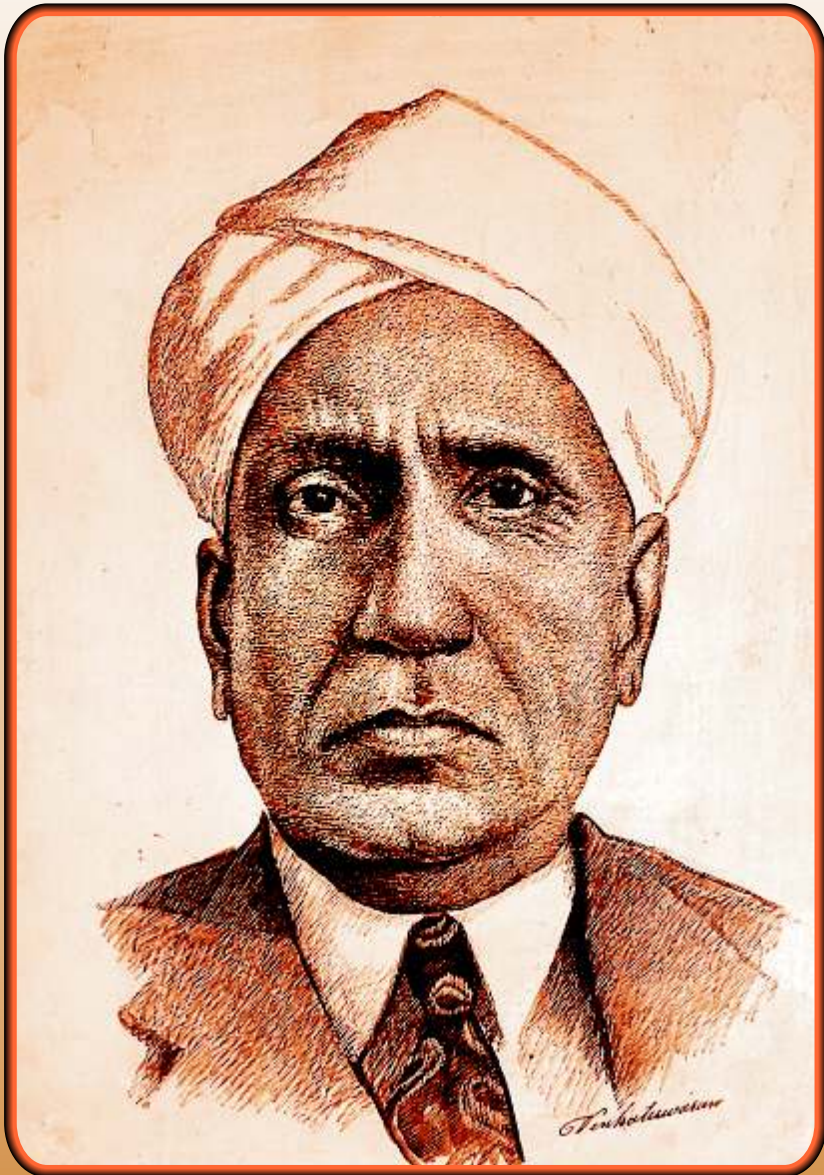


Plate – 31
Sir Chandra Shekhara Venkata Raman
Distinguished Scientist and Nobel Laureate



Plate – 32
Shri Guru Nanak Devji (1469-1539 AD)
The first Guru of the Sikhs.
He worked tirelessly for Hindu-Muslim amity



Plate – 33

Shri Guru Arjan Devji (1563 – 1606 AD)

The fifth Guru of Sikhs.

He was martyred at Lahore by the order of Jehangir



Plate – 34

Shri Guru Tegh Bahadurji (1621 – 1675 AD)

The ninth Guru of Sikhs.

Known as “Hind-Di-Chadar” because he sacrificed his life to save Hindus from tyranny of being converted to Islam as ordered by Emperor Aurangzeb.

He was martyred at Delhi by the order of Aurangzeb

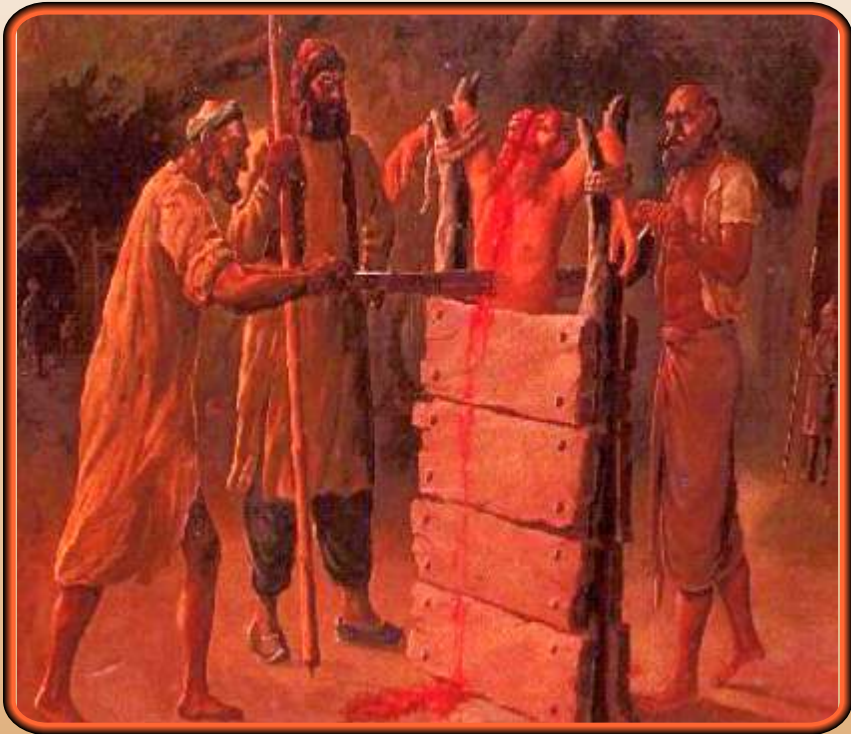


Plate – 35

Bhai Matidasji

He was arrested along with Shri Guru Tegh Bahadurji – the ninth Guru of the Sikhs – by the orders of Aurangzeb and was martyred in 1675 by being cut into two pieces with saw after refusing to embrace Islam.



Plate – 36

Bhai Dayalaji

He was another devotee of Shri Guru Tegh Bahadurji – the ninth Guru of the Sikhs . He had accompanied his Guru to Delhi where he was martyred in a boiling water cauldrom in 1675 for refusing to embrace Islam.



Plate – 37
Bhai Satidasji

He was brother of Bhai Matidasji. Both brothers accompanied Shri Guru Tegh Bahadurji – the ninth Guru of the Sikhs – to Delhi. He was martyred for refusing to embrace Islam by being burnt alive in the rolls of cotton soaked in oil in 1675.



Plate – 38

Shri Guru Gobind Singhji (1666 – 1708 AD)

The tenth Guru of Sikhs.

He sacrificed his father and 4 sons to save Hindus from
Mughal tyranny



Plate – 39

Bhai Mani Singhji (1672-1737)

He was executed at Lahore by cutting up his limbs at every joint under the orders of the Moghul Governor of Lahore



Plate – 40

Banda Singh Bahadur (1670-1716)

He was specially sent to Punjab by Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji from Nanded to end the persecution of Hindus & Sikhs. In this process he succeeded remarkably but was captured ultimately and tortured to death in Delhi in

1716



Plate – 41

Baba Deep Singhji (1682-1757)

An outstanding Sikh warrior and commander of Sikh army. He achieved martyrdom while fighting Ahmad Shah Abdali's army to save the sanctity of Harmandar Sahib

The Spiritual Processes Relating to the Wearing of Turban

In this age of reason and rationality everyone wants to understand the 'why' and 'how' of any ritual or religious practice and therefore it is only in the fitness of things that we understand how turban helps in our spiritual evolution.

Our brain is enclosed in the skull which consists of 26 bones joined together to form a casing that protects the brain from various environmental hazards such as heat, ultra-violet radiation, physical damage etc.

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 heart beats. 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 an antennae, channeling the solar energy and its life force into body and brain.

To amplify the above said effect, 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 have two solar centers: One at the anterior fontanel and the other 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 joora) is traditionally referred to as 'Rishi Knot'. The 'rishi knot' assists in channeling 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 our Sikhs Gurus enjoined their followers to keep their hair unshorn, tie them into a knot at the respective centres 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 is said to help protect the wearer from the psychic negativity of other people.

Living in the awareness of Divine Energy that governs the Universe (Om and Omkara-ॐ in the Hindu faith, < in the Sikh faith) helps us to live at our highest potential. Wearing of turban symbolizes to the wearer that he is living in the 'Divine Law'.

In India, Turban has been essential and integral part of humans since times immemorial irrespective of religion. Our traditional head gear is full of surprises; especially the fact that it existed as early as 10,000 B.C.

While tracing the historical development of head-dress, one can find that the Indian society used head-wraps centuries before the European world took to wearing hats as a part of its regular costume.

The great Hindu law giver - Manu recommended wearing of turban. *Ketya Simriti* advises that hair should remain covered while eating meals.

In this brief presentation – running from Lord Rama’s time to the modern Indian age we have shown through vedic and other authentic references that the Turban / Pugree was and is an integral part of the glorious Hindu ethos and not merely an exclusive part of Sikh attire. Sikhs have up-held this tradition at great cost and sacrifices through the centuries of foreign rule (Muslim / British). Now that our country is free and India is proud of its past glory and culture, why some of our ignorant Indian brethren are showing reluctance and forbidding their children from maintaining our own ancient and glorious culture of wearing turban. On the contrary they should be enthusiastic and supportive of carrying forward our ancient glorious Indian tradition.

It should be a matter of great pride and honour for India that Akal Academies, run by the Kalgidhar Trust / Society, have made pioneering effort in reintroducing and maintaining this tradition of glorious heritage and honour of India by motivating their students to wear turban as a part of their school uniform.

We pray and request every one to support this noble cause, adopted by the Akal Academies of the Kalgidhar Trust / Society, so that they may earn the blessings of God.

RECENT SUPREME COURT RULING REGARDING SCHOOL UNIFORM AND DRESS CODE

New Delhi: Rejecting the plea of a Muslim Student that he should be permitted to sport beard in school, the Supreme Court on Monday the 30th March 2009 observed that secularism cannot be overstretched and that "Talibanization" of the country cannot be permitted. "We don't want to have talibans in the country. Tomorrow a girl student may come and say that she wants to wear a burqa, can we allow it?" Justice Markandeya Katju, speaking for a bench headed by Raveendran observed.

Asserting that he was a secularist to the core, Justice Katju however said religious beliefs cannot be overstretched. "I am secularist. We should strike a balance between rights and personal beliefs. We cannot overstretch secularism", the judge known for his incisive remarks said. Justice Katju passed the observation while dismissing the petition of the student. Mohammad Salim, the student of Nirmala Convent Higher Secondary School, a minority institution in Madhya Pradesh, had sought quashing of the school regulation requiring student to be clean-shaven.

Madhya Pradesh high court verdict that had earlier dismissed his plea, Salim submitted that every citizen was entitled to follow his religious principles and that no one should restrain him from doing so in a secular country like India.

Salim's counsel Justice (retd.) B. A. Khan argued before the bench that sporting beard was an indispensable part of Islam. But Justice Katju was apparently not impressed with the argument and quipped "But you (Khan) don't sport a beard?" the judge asked the counsel.

The apex court then said that a minority institution has its own set of rules and rights provided by Article 30 of the Constitution and the same cannot be breached by any person.

"If there are rules you have to be, you can't say that I will not wear a uniform I will wear only a burqa", the bench observed.

The court further said if the student was not interested in following the rules then he has the option of joining some other institution. "You can join some other institution if you do not want to observe the rules. But you can't ask the school to change the rules for you", Justice Katju observed. Further,

following is the extract from the Record of Proceedings of Court No. 8 of Supreme Court of India.

Petition(s) for Special Leave to Appeal (Civil) No(s) 5939 / 2009
(From the judgment and order dated 12/12/2008 in WP No. 4214/2008 of the HIGH COURT OF M.P. JUDICATURE JABALPUR, BENCH AT GWALIOR)

MOHAMMAD SALIM
VERSUS

Petitioner(s)

PRINCL. NIRMALA CONVENT HIG. SEC & ORS

Respondent(s)

(With appln(s) for exemption from filling O.T. and prayer for interim relief)

Date: 30/3/2009. This petition was called on for hearing today.

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE R.V. RAVEENDRAN

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE MARKANDEY KATJU

For Petitioner(s) Mr. B.A. Khan, Sr. Adv

Mr. Abdul Karim Ansari, Adv.

Mr. Raj Kishore, Adv.

Mr. Anjum Ahmed, Adv.

Mr. Gulfeshan Javed, Adv.

Mr. Munawar Sultana, Adv.

Mr. Aftab Ali Khan, Adv.

For Respondent(s)

Upon hearing counsel the court made the following order

The special leave petition is dismissed.

(Anand Singh)
Assistant Registrar

(Pawan Kumar)
Court Master



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