

IGNCA INVENTORY ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Name of the Element: Practice of turban tying in Rajasthan.

Community: Among the Hindus, the names of communities are: Rajput, Charan, Bhaat, Bishnoi, Jasnathi, Jaat, Raika (Rebari), Kalbelia, Jogi, Ramsnehi, Brahmin, Gujjar, Mahajan, Meena, Bhil, Gawaria, Kamadh, Meghwal, Suthar, Naai, Lohar, and Kumhar. Besides this, there are Muslim communities like Langa, Manganyar, Sindhi, Qayamkhani, Rangrez and also the Sikh community resident of the state. This tradition spans across all class, caste and creed divisions.

Region: In all the 33 Districts of Rajasthan we can see traditional demarcation of regions such as Marwar, Mewar, Dhundhar, Hadoti, Godwad, Shekhawati, Vagad, Bikana, and Mewat being the prime regions where the culture is prevalent.

Brief Description: The practice of turban tying, (safa wearing in local parlance), consists of tying a long, generally unstitched cloth, in a set manner of wrapping in folds, which is tied on the head of men. The cloth could have a plain texture or be printed in various designs. There are two primary variants: a) safa, which is 8 - 10 m in length, and 1 m in width; and b) paag or pagdi, which is around 20 m in length, and 20 cm in width. Given the immensity of length, the tying of a turban is a complex mechanism. Each community has its own unique style of wearing this outfit.

The earliest evidence of the element is available from a 2nd century BC statue of the Kushana period, depicting 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.

Today, the turban is a symbol of pride and identity. Also, it has several practical uses. It protects the wearers' head from extreme temperatures. The turban can be used as a pillow, a mattress, or a rope to draw water from wells. Rajasthan is a desert state, and people have compensated for the lack of colour in nature 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.

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