

Turbans in general

Turban is more than a headgear worn by Indian men which is folded or twisted like a rope and tied in a myriad ways. In India, turban has been used by all classes of the society from farmers to the rulers. Variations can be seen every minute but they bring all the difference. Evolving from centuries the pagdi has become a symbol of chivalry, honor, respect and brotherhood. Surrendering turban to another indicates one's subjugation, while placing it at someone's feet is symbolic of total surrender. In a variety of cloth from fine muslins to heavy chanderi, Paithani and Benares brocades, each of the different styles and types of turbans (in general), denotes the class, caste and region of the wearer. Varying styles of turban denote region and caste. These variations are known by different names such as 'pagadi' and 'safa'. Turbans come in all shapes, sizes and colours; and there are specific turbans for specific occasions as well. An Indian pagdi is usually 82 feet long and 8 inches wide. On the other hand a 'safa' is shorter and broader.

The Royal pagdi was at its regal best worn when adorned by several ornaments, reflective of power and royal status of the ruler. The diversity of royal turbans is seen in visuals of Royal gatherings while the Gwalior Maharaja wore a very distinct boat shaped Shindeshahi pagri at an angle.

Shindeshahi Pagdi

The term *Shindeshahi* is derived from the word "Shinde" which was a popular Maratha title. A Group of sardars came into power in early 18th century led by Shrimant Ranoji Rao Shinde in the Maratha states. Later his successors from Shrimant Maharaja Mahadji adopted Scindia as their family name. In the past 3 centuries pagdi used by the Scindia rulers have achieved its unique identity and it

has also witnessed changes in its shape times immemorial. Types and style of ornamentation on pagdis have also been changing along with the time.

A Special department was formed under specifically skilled people called *pagarbandhs*, who were appointed only for making pagdis for the royalty.

The 60 meter long scindia pagdi also popularly called the shindeshahi pagdi is made of very fine silk cloth, which gradually turned into a representation of royal patronage by the scindia dynasty. Pagdis used by Sardars/nobles of the Scindia Royal Darbar varied in length and ornamentation according to their position in the Darbar/court. The design of sardar's pagdi although has a close resemblance with the Scindia Maharaja's pagdi but it is shorter in length. Preparation of the pagdi usually takes 3 to 4 days.

One of the most important decorative elements that this pagdi constitutes of is known as *toda and Turra*. It is basically a lace or set of gold chains which hangs on the front portion of the pagdi. *Toda* is also a representation of status and position of any Maratha Sardars/ noble in the Royal court of the Scindias. It is bestowed by the Maharaja as an act of appreciation on only select few Maratha Sardars for their dedicated service towards the dynasty and the Maratha people.

Whereas, *turra* is a part of the pagdi which gets the shape of a feather, and also to some extent resembles a Chinese hand fan. This particular shape is obtained only after tugging one end of the cloth on the right side of the turban. The length of cloth, sophistications of tying process and crisp finish along with ornamentation gives the Royal pagdi a distinct look which is incomparable around the globe similar to the royal succession of Scindia genealogy.