

Practical Functions of the Turban

It is clear that the turban has a lot of symbolism. But it also has many practical functions. These are described below:

Cranial Adjustments

The human skull is not solid, but instead is made up of 26 bones. The alignment of these bones affects our health and our mental condition. Osteopathic Doctors have developed a science of cranial adjustments, which can be used to treat many general and specific health problems. This science comes under the category of alternative medicine like Acupuncture. Now when a turban is tied properly, it applies various pressures to your skull. This is obvious, but the effect of this is that it adjusts the bones of the skull and keeps them aligned throughout the day. It helps to contain and maintain the integrity of the skull. It essentially provides you with a free cranial adjustment, something which an Osteopathic Doctor will charge you for.

Spiritual Elevation

When we meditate we try and focus our mind, and consequently we slow our thoughts and produce a stillness of the mind. The only problem is that when we stop meditating our mind slowly starts becoming erratic again and we slowly lose this stillness and calmness. These good vibrations escape out of our tenth gate which is located in our head. Wearing a turban helps to keep these good vibrations in for longer. This is achieved because the turban puts force on the pressure points of the head which causes the energy to rise upwards, towards the crown chakra (7th energy centre) and consequently protects your crown chakra. A good way of thinking of a turban is like a glove. When it's cold outside we put gloves on our hands to help keep the heat in. When we wear a turban it helps to keep the good vibrations in. Of course if you don't meditate then you have no good vibrations to keep in, so meditation is obviously a pre-requisite.

Clean Hair

Wearing a turban helps to maintain long hair more easily by keeping it tied and clean. This especially was important for Sikhs who would go out into battle frequently, so that their long hair would not be hanging loose, which would otherwise create a disadvantage in the battlefield.

Respect to God

The covering of one's head is a way of showing respect to God and the Guru. The head is significant because it represents the ego, and the covering of the head therefore represents that before bowing to the Guru, we must leave our ego behind. That is why even if you don't wear a turban, you still cover your head in a Gurdwara (Sikh place of worship).

Does wearing a Turban make a good Sikh?

No way. Sikhism is all about keeping love for God in your heart and spreading that light through your actions. Without these qualities, your outer uniform is meaningless. A royal uniform must go hand in hand with royal actions.

Summary

- Throughout various religions, the turban has been seen as a symbol of holiness, dedication to God, stoic courage, dignity, justice and purity
- Practically, the turban gives you a free cranial adjustment, protects your crown chakra whilst keeping in good vibrations, keeps hair tied and clean, and shows respect to God
- Wearing a turban does not make you a good Sikh, because a royal uniform must go hand in hand with royal actions



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The Turban

Sikhism

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Introduction

As you might expect, the heritage and history of the turban dates back many thousands of years. This short essay examines the historical significance and meaning of the turban with respect to the major world cultures and religions. It then highlights the practical benefits derived from wearing a turban.

Ancient Civilisations

In ancient Egypt, the turban was worn as an ornamental head dress. They called it 'pjr', from which is derived the word 'pugree', so commonly used in India. The Egyptians removed the turban at the time of mourning, a custom which prevailed in the Punjab (India) up to the end of the last century. Turbans in various forms have also been worn by the ancient Chinese, Japanese, Hebrews and ancient South Americans.

Symbol of Prophethood and Holiness

One of the commands of God to Moses was to wear a turban as the symbol of prophethood, holiness and divine power. This command was obeyed by the Jews and the Muslims for centuries and ignored or forgotten by the Christians.

Symbol of Dedication to God

The turban was an essential part of anointing men with missionary aims. The anointment process included pouring oil and fixing some mark of devotion on the turban. The Old Testament provides evidence for this by stating, *"Set the turban on his head, and the symbol of holy dedication on the turban. Take the anointing oil, pour it on his head and anoint him"* (Exodus, 29-6).

Symbol of Royalty

The turban has been an item of kingly regalia and was used in place of the crown. The Old

Testament provides evidence for this by stating, *"For Jerusalem's sake I will speak out, Until her right shines forth like the sunrise ... You will be a glorious crown in the Lord's hand, a kingly turban in the hand of your God"* (Isaiah, 62, 2-10).

Throughout the Islamic world, the turban still continues to be used by the monarchy, in place of a crown. Also a much quoted Hadith states, *"turbans are the crowns of the Arabs"*.

In India, the turban was an item of clothing reserved for high caste, rich aristocrats. It was not appropriate for people from lower classes and castes to wear such royal clothing.

Symbol of Stoic Courage

It has been customary in many cultural traditions for example, in Egypt, to remove ones head wear in times of mourning. However historically, the brave and holy were not supposed to feel sad or mourn and this was shown symbolically by them maintaining their turbans on their heads. The Old Testament states, *"You are not to lament, not to weep, not to let your tears run down. Groan in silence, do not go into mourning for the dead, knot your turban round your head, put your sandals on your feet, do not cover your beard"* (Ezekiel, 24: 17-19).

Symbol of Dignity and Self Respect

The turban has always been a symbol of dignity, self respect and authority. A blemish on the turban meant a blot on ones character. Similarly, an insult to the turban meant an unbearable insult to one's personality. Prophet Isaiah has said, *"When God takes away the turban, he takes away the dignity of man"*.

Symbol of Justice and Charity

The Old testament records the life of Job, who looks back at his life and remembers all the good deeds he did during his days of prosperity. He identifies the turban with righteousness and uses

it as a metaphor for justice and charity. The Old testament states, *"I had dressed myself in righteousness like a garment, justice for me was a cloak and turban, I was eyes for the blind and feet for the lame"* (Job, 29: 14).

Symbol of Purity

In the past, dirty clothes were a sign of slavery and humiliation. The Old Testament speaks of Joshua, for whom dirty clothes were a sign of captivity, exile, misery, physical humiliation and harm. The Old Testament states, *"Now Joshua was dressed in dirty clothes as he stood before the angel of God. The angel said these words to those who stood before him: 'Take off his dirty clothes, clothe him in splendid robes of state and put a clean turban on his head.' They put a clean turban on his head. The angel said, 'I have taken away your iniquity (sin) from you'"* (Zachariah, 3: 4-9).

Conclusion so Far

Seven different symbolic meanings of the turban have been identified. This is by no means a complete list but it is sufficient for a basic introduction to the turban.

Significance of the Turban for Sikhs

The 10th and final human Guru gave the Sikh community a concrete identity by commanding all Sikhs to wear the royal turban and giving all Sikh men and women the royal surnames 'Singh' meaning Lion and 'Kaur' meaning Princess.

Sikhism is a royal religion open to anyone. The followers of Sikhism are all members of a royal family and the crown of the Sikh family is the turban.