

Dress Code

In the latest issue of Straight Path News (January 16 - 31 2022), Janab Mahmudul Hasan Khan Sahib Soofi, has touched on a burning issue about the Dress Code, and have concluded his article with a questionnaire:

Did Hz Mahdi Maud (AS) ever use any particular dress for all times? I would like to know if anyone has the information about Hz Mahdi Maud (AS) wearing a particular dress.

Needless to say, that I am not a scholar and no authority on any dress code but would like to respond with my stray thoughts about this topic.

The Islamic dress code is defined by the Arabic word ***Awrah*** meaning *nakedness*. The whole concept is to cover the nakedness. Men and women have different specified standards to cover nakedness. For men the minimum nakedness to be covered is from the navel to the knees, whereas for the women, the whole body including the hair are to be covered in front of ***Na Mahram*** (*a person with whom it is lawful for a Muslim woman to marry*) ***except*** the face, the hands and the feet. This is called ***Satar e Aurat*** (the word is used to refer those parts of the body that shall be covered up by Muslim women) But, it is desirable for the men also to cover the ***Satar e Aurat***. Hence the custom and tradition among the Muslim men to cover their head, even though it's not obligatory, but has been the practice of our beloved Prophet^{PBUH}, hence a Sunnah.

We know in detail what dresses our beloved Prophet^{PBUH} did wear. He did wear all the types of dresses that were in vogue and were customary among the people. He wore thob, gameez, jubba, shawl, qaba, izaar (waist band), tahband, amama, cap, turban, helmet etc. In short, he did wear all types of garments that were available, and according to the occasion. At the battles he did wear helmets. When he entered Mecca, after the conquest, he was wearing a chain mail cap (a military cap). For the footwear he did wear slippers and sandals. He did wear all kinds of fabric except silk. For the headgear sometimes he did wear a cap and sometimes he did wear a turban, He had a turban, which is wrapped around the head, as is the dress of ordinary people in some countries nowadays, such as Yemen, Sudan etc. He did not wear anything that made him stand out from other people. Presently the Saudis usually do not wear any turbans. The chief mufti of Saudi Arabia, or the king of Saudi Arabia do not wear any turban.

The dress of the Arabs for sure, never included **PAJAMA**, hence it could be safely said that our beloved Prophet^{PBUH} never did wear a PAJAMA. The custom of the Arabs was to wear a Tahband or a lungi as we call it. This outfit is still widely used among the Muslims in various places including the Indian subcontinent. Pajama is a Persian (Irani) outfit introduced to Muslims after the conquest of Persia. It is said that Hazrath Omer Farooq^{RZ} tried to discourage it's use by the Muslims, but it has been completely adapted now.

We don't know if Imamuna^{AS} did wear Tahband or not, but from a naql we know that he did wear pajamas, and we also know that it was the outfit of the day, and still is.

Naql number 606 in Hashia Insaf Nama: Allah Most High had sent a pair of pajamas to Imām Mahdi^{AS}. It was longer than necessary. Somebody told the Imām^{AS} that the pajamas should be above the ankle joint according to Sunnat.” The Imam^{AS} got a large part of the pajamas cut. His emulation of Prophet Muhammad^{SLM} was perfect. It means that the Imam^{AS} emulated the practice of Prophet Muhammad^{SLM} in qaul, fel and hal (word, deed, and condition).

We also know from a couple of Naqls that for sure Huzoor Sani e Mahdi^{RZ} did wear pajamas, because there is a Naql about his pajamas in Insaf Nama. We also know that Bandagimian^{RZ} did wear angarkha and patka. We know it because we do the ziarath of these two relics every Shawal at the masjid of Hazrath Syed Ali Masood Mian Sahib Chanchalguda. We also learn from oral legend that Hazrath Bandagimian Shah Qasim Mujtahid e Groh^{Rh} also did wear an angarkha. From a couple of naqls we know that Hazrath Bandagimian Shah Naimath^{RZ} also did wear Pajamas.

The traditional outfit that some of our more conservative Murshideen wear today i.e., Angarkha, Pagdi, Pajama and the Rumaal on the shoulder, as per the oral legend, is the **military outfit** of those times. It's actually not the outfit of the clergy of the old days. Even the *Pagdi* is part of the military outfit, and not specific to any caste or community. This type of dress is still in vogue in North India including Rajasthan and areas around it. It is well-known fact that Imamuna^{AS} was born in Jaunpur in North India, and all of our Murshideen have migrated from North India

to all over the subcontinent. These Murshideen, being traditionalists, do not change to the contemporary dressing and outfit, hence their dress is still the angarkha and Pagdi. Those who have adapted a little, their dress is Sherwani and shamla.

As far as the question of the outfit and the dress that Imamuna^{AS} used to wear, we can only make a safe guess that he did wear whatever was customary during his period. It may most probably include an angarkha, pajama and turban.

Now, the question of the importance of the turban, or the pagdi as we refer to it, there is no mention that Imamuna did tie any pagdi to any of his disciples or whoever made a covenant (baiyath) with him. We know that he did teach the intrinsic meaning of the Zikrullah (talqeen e zikr) and emphasized on performing the Zikrullah most of the time. As has been mentioned in the Naql above, the outfit or the type of dress had no significance for him.

From one incident, we know for sure that on one occasion he was wearing a military outfit. When Hazzrath Bandagimian Shaikh Sadruddin^{RZ}, a learned scholar in Sindh, visited Imamuna^{AS} in order to examine his claim of being the Promised Mahdi, he found Imamuna^{AS} wearing a military outfit and armed with bow and arrows, as against his expectation of finding him in a scholar's outfit or a priestly outfit, and turned around to go back, but on the way back he heard the voices from the trees and the stones saying "**Hada Mahdi**" *this is Mahdi*, and turned around and went to meet Imamuna^{AS} and eventually made covenant with him. This incident shows that the type of outfit was not important for Imamuna^{AS}. Maybe, he actually preferred a warrior's outfit to a priest's dress.

It is narrated that Imam Mahdi^{AS} said in Hindi:

"We wear old and torn clothes, eat plain food/

"We do not go the houses of the rich and the temples housing idols.

" This is our practice (in station and in journey)/

" We look for two things: water and a mosque."

As far as I know, there is no mention in our literature about the type of headgear worn by Imamuna^{AS} or his companions. As per the tradition of the day, it most probably was a pagdi.

On the other hand, we know that Imamuna^{AS} allowed wearing decent dress but with the condition that one does not forget the Zikr:

HASHIA 574. Some people told Imām Mahdi^{AS}, “We renounce the world.” The Imām^{AS} said, “Follow and act according to what I say. Eat chicken. Wear good clothes and sleep on (luxurious) beds. But do not yearn for it. Give your heart to Allah.” They asked, “How can this be done?” The Imām^{AS} said, “That is your business.” After this they renounced the world and remained in the august company of the Imam^{AS}.

Thus, we know that we are allowed to wear any good dress if it complies with the sharia. There is no mention in our literature about any importance being given to the Pagdi, or it being the part of the dress code of Imamuna^{AS} or any of his companions. Or the pagdi being any symbol of being a Murshid or a Faqeer. It may not be out of place to mention that until the very recent past it was also the headgear of the kasibs, and also of the general public.

A pagdi is still widely in vogue as a normal dress and headgear in many places and in different communities. In Rajasthan and all those areas around it, a pagdi is a common part of the dress.

To associate the pagdi with the sacredness and symbol of being the headgear of Imamuna^{AS} and the Prophet^{PBUH} describing it as the holy and sacred apparel seems farfetched.

As we know from another naql, Imamuna^{AS} never paid any importance to the dress or footwear. To him the dress was not sacred, he emphasized on good deeds and remembrance of Allah.

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59. It is narrated that if somebody asked Imam Mahdi^{AS} for a piece of his apparel or footwear, he would say: "Take this and use it and do not keep it in the house (as a memento). Even if you wear the skin of this servant (of Allah), you will not achieve salvation (Najat) unless you act according to what I have asked you to do."

I know at least one person who told his murshid that he would like to not wear the shamla and advertise his Tark e Duniya.

I also know at least one very eminent Murshid, who shunned the traditional dress of Angarkha, Pajama, Rumaal on the shoulder and Pagdi on the head, because he felt that it has become a status symbol instead of humility, and would prefer only kurta, pajama, and a Rumaal wrapped around the head or sometimes just a regular skull cap.

I think it was in the following the practice of humility expressed by Imamuna^{AS}. Hashia Shareef Naql 553: If somebody were to bring the footwear of Imām Mahdi^{AS} and place it before him. He would pick it up and throw it at some distance. Then he would go where the footwear was and wear it. The Imām^{AS} would say, “Mahdi has not come to make others lift his footwear. Mahdi’s arrival is for reaching the seekers to Allah.”

In the recent past, the tradition of Angarkha pagdi as the common dress, gave way to Sherwani and topi, which was widely adapted, specially by the white-collar people, and that has now given way to the regular pant and shirt and kurta pajama. Similarly, the ladies in our community used to wear the Rajasthani costume of Lehenga and Kurta. This has slowly given way to saree and now the kurta shalwar is in vogue.

Some Murshideen adapted Sherwani and shamla instead of Angarkha and pagdi, and today most Murshideen and fuqara wear the sherwani, itself shows that there is no particular dress code of Imamuna^{AS}. It may also be noted that either the angarkha pagdi, or sherwani and topi were associated with any particular section of the society. It was the dress of all the sections of the society, irrespective of the religious persuasion, not only of the Muslims or the Mahdavis. As we still see today, the Sherwani is the apparel of choice for all the weddings in all the sections of the society.

There is no indication that Imamuna^{AS} or any of his companions put the pagdi on the head of anybody as a sign or symbol of succession, or as a sign of having made covenant with him or as a sign or symbol of renunciation of the world (Tark e Duniya). On the other hand, we know from our literature that Imamuna^{AS} instructed the person whoever made covenant with him or whoever did Tark e Duniya, in the practice of Zikr Khafi and instructed and insisted on the practice of Zikr all the time.

If somebody wants to give the pagdi so much importance, respect, and honor, in the first place, it is for those leaders of the community to honor it by honoring the teachings of Imamuna^{AS} by not going to the places where Imamuna^{AS} have

expressly prohibited from visiting and be in the awkward position of misrepresenting or humiliating the community.

Hope this lengthy article helps answer some of the questions raised by Janab Soofi Sahib.