

## **Himachali Cap: An Emblem of Heritage and Pride**

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### **Abstract**

*A person's wardrobe says a lot about their culture, personality, and personal preferences, making it an important aspect of their existence. It may be used for protection in addition to being aesthetically pleasing apparel. Additionally, to improve a person's look and personality, clothing may be paired with a variety of accessories. The appropriate accessory selection may transform an ugly ensemble into something lovely. Headgear is one example of an accessory.*

*The current review study provides a thorough explanation of caps, with particular attention to the state-named Himachali Topi, also known as the Himachali Cap. The state's indigenous people wore these Himachali caps as headwear to defend themselves from the chilly winters. In addition, it is regarded as a crucial component of their traditional outfits, representing Himachal Pradesh. People would wear it for ceremonial events like wedding, local festivities and religious gatherings. The varieties of these caps are significant in various parts of Himachal Pradesh. This research examines the variations in pattern, colour, design, and decoration seen in these hats. It has been noted that Himachali people wear this headgear as a show of pride. These caps are also a popular tourist attraction, and they are often purchased as souvenirs.*

**Keywords:** Himachal Pradesh, culture, handicraft, Himachali cap, Ornamentation

### **Introduction**

Humans have inhabited in Himachal Pradesh from the beginning of civilization. It has a long and diverse history, separated into various distinct eras. It is located in northern India and a mountain state in the Western Himalayas. It is India's northernmost state, sharing borders with the union territories of Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, and a small border with Uttar Pradesh. The state is also known as Dev Bhoomi, which means 'Land of Gods', and it has an international boundary with the Tibet Autonomous Region of China. Because of its challenging topography, Himachal Pradesh was one of the few states

that had mostly escaped the influence of outside customs. The state has seen tremendous social and economic transformation.

The crafts of Himachal Pradesh are well known. Notable items include carpets, leather crafts, Kullu shawls, paintings from Kangra, Chamba Rumals, embroidered grass shoes (Pullan chappal), silver jewellery, metal objects, knitted woollen socks, pattoo, cane and bamboo basketry (Wicker and Rattan), and woodwork. Recent years have seen a rise in both domestic and international demand for these handicrafts and GI Tags (geographical indication of goods) has been given to many of them. The Himachali cap, a wearable artifact, is a testament to the cultural heritage of Himachal Pradesh. Crafted by local artisans, often from the Gaddi and Gujjar communities, these caps are not just garments but also pieces of wearable art. They serve as a resilient torchbearer of the region's cultural heritage, symbolizing the pride of the community and demonstrating the region's ability to adapt while maintaining its roots.

#### **List of handicraft GI Tags of Himachal Pradesh**

| Sr. No. | Name of item                   | Goods (As per Sec 2 (f) of GI Act 1999 ) | Year    |
|---------|--------------------------------|--|---------|
| 1       | Kullu Shawl                    | Handicraft                               | 2004-05 |
| 2       | Chamba Rumal                   | Handicraft                               | 2008-09 |
| 3       | Kinnauri Shawl                 | Handicraft                               | 2010-11 |
| 4       | Kullu ShawL (Logo)             | Handicraft                               | 2013-14 |
| 5       | Kangra Paintings               | Handicraft                               | 2013-14 |
| 6       | Chamba Chappal                 | Handicraft                               | 2021-22 |
| 7       | Lahauli Knitted Socks & Gloves | Handicraft                               | 2021-22 |

*(Registered GIs / Geographical Indications / Intellectual Property India, n.d.)*

As said by present Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh Mr. Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, the process to secure Geographical Indication (GI) tag for Himachali cap, Sirmauri Loeya, Mandi Sepubari, Chamba metal craft, Kinnauri apple and Kinnauri ornaments is under way and the proposal is in consideration with the Registrar of Geographical Indication. ('GI Tag to Himachali Cap and Kinnauri Apple under Consideration', 2023)

## **Objectives of the study**

1. To study the types of Himachali caps.
2. To study the ornamentations used and its relation to social and traditional values.
3. To create awareness among the general public regarding the types of Himachali caps and its relation to different cities of the state.

## **Methodology**

An introductory historical approach has been adopted for the research and also data has been collected from various published and unpublished sources.

## **History**

The Himachali cap has centuries of history and is deeply ingrained in the region's cultural identity. The Himachali cap is an icon that captures the spirit of Himachali culture. Initially, these hats were originally designed for utilitarian purposes, such as protecting the occupants' heads from the severe mountain weather. These hats represented rank and identity and were worn by local monarchs and authorities. This famous cap has significance and acts as a distinctive statement of identification for this region. Over antiquity, the habit of wearing Himachali caps crossed societal hierarchies, becoming an essential component of Himachali costume. The cap's innovative design enabled it to be practical, comfortable, and fashionable all at once. By wearing the Himachali cap, individuals not only showcase their connection to Himachal Pradesh but also express a sense of belonging to their specific community or region within the state. The design and style of the Himachali cap can vary based on the specific region or community within Himachal Pradesh. Different areas may have their own unique patterns, colors, and embellishments that distinguish their caps from others. This cap serves as a visual representation of the diversity and cultural richness of Himachal Pradesh, highlighting the unique traditions and customs that define each area.

## **Materials used**

For the construction of these caps local wool was used earlier but nowadays for the cost reduction of these caps, tweed fabric is being used. Tweed fabric is made on power loom rather than handlooms. Handlooms are only used to make pure wool fabric. Twill weave and its derivatives like diamond weave and pointed weave is used for the construction of fabric. Acrylic, cashmilon, polywool (blend of polyester and wool) is used to make tweed fabric.

For the weaving of borders (for kulluvi topi) small tapestry looms or the smaller versions of handlooms are used. The colourful threads used for borders weaving are acrylic and cashmilon, which is generally imported from Ludhiana (Punjab) or obtained from local or nearby mills. Velvet fabric or Makhmal fabric used in Kinnauri and Bushahri topi is imported from China.

## **Results and Discussions**

### **Types of Himachali Caps**

**Kulluvi Topi:** The Kulluvi males once wore a headdress known as a kola-topa. However, the headdress has become less fashionable and is only worn as part of dancing attire or for ceremonial events. Crafted from premium quality, hand-loomed black wool fabric, the kola-topa resembles a cap and is shaped like a circular bag. The bottom part of the cap is rolled and brimmed up, leaving the higher, which covers the skull, semi-spherical. The upper half of the cap therefore forms a projecting circular ring along the line of the forehead. A lace of merry-gold flowers is knotted around the brim of this cap. It is fastened to a silver base that resembles a shuttlecock and holds an elegant upright monal-tuft. The popular headdress these days is a well-known Kulluvi topi instead of the traditional kola-topa. It is well-known around the world as one of the varieties of Pahari caps. It is distinguished from its other regional equivalents by a woollen stripe on the lappet that is woven with vibrant geometric motifs that are the same as those found on Kulluvi shawls. These stripes are made specifically for this use on handlooms. A unique striped cotton lining material is used to pipe and meticulously trim the lappet's edges. The ornate lappet on the Kulluvi hat covers a portion of the forehead from right to left when worn. (Hāṇḍā, 1998)

**Ornamentation of Kulluvi Topi:** The items used for the decorations vary from region to region according to the purpose of wearing. Historically, it was adorned with vibrantly coloured monal bird feathers until the bird's status as an endangered species was announced. In some areas of Kullu region, few pieces of the first harvest of crop are decorated on the topi during the rituals of harvesting season. Whether it is the blooms of seasonal flowers or the green kernels and panicle of wheat and rice plants respectively. Gold and silver brooches and peacock feathers are also used as an accessory to decorate the cap.



Kola Topa



Kulluvi topi decorated with gold brooch

**Bushahri Topi:** There is no greater example, save the well-known Bushahri topi, to serve as a representation of this cultural zone. People of various ages use it as a headdress, even ladies occasionally. Comparable to the Kulluvi cap, the Bushahari cap is equally identical to it. However, it has a stripe of shanil fabric or parrot-green velvet adorning the lappet. Remarkably, the former Bushahr state's "state color" was parrot-green, which was represented by the cap's lappet of that hue. (Hāṇḍā, 1998)

**Ornamentation of Bushahri Topi:** The locals adorn this headgear with clusters of fulech flowers, called bhraham kamal. Some individuals wear white cotton boat-style caps, or topis, or safas (turbans) in the Outer Seraj region. When wearing the Bushahri topi, the lappet covers a portion of the forehead from left to right. (Hāṇḍā, 1998)

**Political Influence:** The reason the headgear has come to symbolize the party is because Mr. Virbhadra Singh, the Congress party's four-time chief minister of Himachal Pradesh, is a native of Sarahan and the heir of the Bushahr royal family (Verma, 2018).



Bushahri topi (*Himachali Cap – Know All about Pahari Topi | Rohal's Diary, 2017*)

**Kinnauri Topi:** Tepang is the headdress worn by the males. This woolen cap is rounded and has a velvet or shenil front band, typically in a crimson color. A popular Kinnauri hat is this one. The folks decorate this headgear with flowers tucked within the fold. Kinnaur women dress similarly to their male counterparts, in tepang or thepang. Kir-kir thepang is the headdress worn by namsha, or the bride. Compared to the typical thepang, this cap is unique. Only worn at a bride's farewell ceremony. (Hāṇḍā, 1998)

**Ornamentation of Kinnauri topi:** The Kinnauri topi with its dried flowers have long been a popular attraction. Kinnauri cap is well-known not only in Himachal, but across the world. This headgear, also known as "Thepang" in the local language, represents pride, culture, status, and love. The green or red velvet on the cap is locally referred to as "Mokhmal". The second colorful component of the cap is called "Patti", and it might be brown, white, or gray because it is made of sheep wool. The renowned blooms at the top of the cap comprise white leaves known locally as "Chamka" and scientifically as *Oroxylum Indicum* (Tatpatanga). The light brown stick originates of wheat by rolling two stems towards each other, known as "Tekema" in the local tongue. Last but not least, the exquisite colored balls on the cap are formed of cottonseeds, technically known as *Chorizia Speciosa* and locally known as "Bakhri kan". These balls are just seeds that create the appearance of cotton balls. These are created by tagging in the shape of a ball then dyed in various colours. These flowers may also be constructed with other colors of wool. The inhabitants of Kinnaur value this Kinnauri Cap

much. Although they see it as their crown, none is aware that the "Chamka" is on the verge of extinction owing to overuse. People are picking the immature Chamka fruit for financial gain, not even saving one fruit for future generations. Furthermore, if that keeps up, Bakhri Kan could have a similar situation in the future. (Negi, 2019)

**Political Influence:** Throughout time, the red color has evolved into the BJP party's official color. The people of Kinnaur are now typically seen in green because of their close proximity to the Bushahr estate and the region's general affiliation with the Congress party. (*Issues and Analysis on The Himachali Cap - Culture, Legacy and Heritage for State General Knowledge (GK) Preparation*, n.d.)



Kinnauri topi



Kinnauri bride

**Lahauli Topi:** The woolen cap that the Lahulas typically wear is round and has a flat top, just like the Pahari cap. However, the lappet is left plain and composed of the same material as the body of the cap, setting it apart from other caps in the genre. The locals wore a cap

similar to a Gilgit type cap in the past; it resembled rolled up woollen sacks that were brimmed to fit on the head. These caps are no longer widely used. (Hāṇḍā, 1998)

**Ornamentation of Lahauli topi:** Lahauli caps are generally decorated with pressed flowers. These caps were used as accessories as well as status symbol on different occasions, festivals, marriages and other religious functions. On the day of marriage before the departure of baraat these decorated caps offered to all the baraatis by the groom's sister.



Lahauli topi (*Jitsun & Abhishek / Tribal Wedding at Lahaul-Spiti, n.d.*)

## Conclusion

The Himachali topi, a traditional cap in Himachal Pradesh, is a symbol of identity and cultural heritage. It represents the unique identity and tradition of the region's people, preserving indigenous skills and livelihoods. The craftsmanship of the Himachali topi is passed down through generations, using locally sourced materials and traditional techniques. Wearing the topi is a symbol of pride and identity, distinguishing Himachali's from other communities and serving as a reminder of their roots and heritage. It represents the distinct qualities and history of the city or town it belongs to, embodying the people and customs of the area. The topi has also gained popularity among tourists as a souvenir item, contributing to the local economy through handicraft sales and tourism-related activities. Despite its prevalence, the Himachali topi has undergone adaptations and innovations to cater to modern tastes and preferences. In conclusion, the Himachali topi represents the essence of Himachali culture, craftsmanship, identity, and adaptability, making it a cherished symbol both locally and globally. The current study focuses on documenting the history and types of the himachali topi's, which is a representation of a dedicated craftsperson and aesthetics. The documentation will help to serve the database of these himachali topi's to upcoming researchers, designers, and fashion innovators.



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