

# Tribal Baiga art

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**In news**– Jodhaiya Bai from Umaria district in Madhya Pradesh, has been conferred with India's fourth highest civilian award Padma Shri in the field of art for promoting the tribal Baiga art.

## About the tribal Baiga art-

- Women of the **Baiga tribe of Madhya Pradesh are known for their art of tattooing or 'Godna'**.
- This practice has been an integral part of the Baiga culture for the women of the tribe. This art form instils a sense of pride among the women. **The women feel incomplete without their godna.**
- The patterns drawn have remained unchanged over the centuries. **They believe that these tattoo marks are the only things that are certain to go with them till the grave and beyond.**
- The **First tattoo is generally applied on the forehead of the girl at the age of nine or ten, without which a woman is not considered to be part of the Baiga tribe.**
- More gets added on other parts of the body as the girl grows up. **The last godna, called Chhati Godai, is done on the chest of the woman after she delivers a child.**
- The **Badi (Gond)** community people work as the tattoo artists and inherit this skill from their forefathers.
- The process takes place in the forests, as the men consider it to be an ill omen to see the blood of a woman while going out to work.
- **The tattoos are inked using kajal which is powder obtained from crushing Ramtilla (Niger seeds).**
- The initial patterns are drawn using small bamboo sticks, after which needles are used to etch these into the skin which allows the ink to permeate beneath the skin.
- The area is washed with lukewarm water and cow dung

once the etching is complete. The skin takes around a week to heal and extracts from the Raijal herb are applied to help the healing process.

- Once, every Baiga woman was adorned with godna, but today it is far less prevalent amongst the younger generation.

### **About Baiga tribe-**

- The mysterious Baiga Tribe of Madhya Pradesh, found first documented reference in a British army report of 1867.
- The report that was prepared by Captain W.B.Thomson refers to the Baiga tribe as, “the wildest of the tribes, inhabiting the most inaccessible hills and the remotest forests.
- They have sub-castes: Bijhwar, Narotia, Bharotiya, Nahar, Rai maina and Kath maina. The name Baiga means “sorcerer-medicine man”.
- The Baigas are actually believed to have originated as a sub-branch of the Bhumia tribe of Chhota Nagpur.
- They practice a form of shifting cultivation called, “Bewar.” Some Baigas have however taken to normal ploughing nowadays. Traditionally the Baigas have depended on the forests and its vegetation for food and livelihood.
- The Baigas were essentially forest dwellers, living deep in the jungles in harmony with nature.
- However, over the years deforestation and the march of development has ensured that they migrate to places nearer the cities.
- Today the Baiga tribe is concentrated in the state of Madhya Pradesh, but can also be found inhabiting parts of Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand also.