

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.