

Changing Living Pattern Among Baigas of Central India

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Abstract

Baigas are followers of one of the very ancient cultural tradition and claim themselves as first human on earth. A significant part of their culture is lost or changed due to impact of migration, acculturation, development and change with time and space. The people who are living near the urban centers and have frequent interactions with the other communities, or their children attending to schools and they have made links with the outsiders, look a bit different from their Baiga brethren living on the hill tops and in remote forest tracts. This paper deals with the culture, life style and cultural change among the Baigas of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh in my area of study.

Keywords: Lifestyle; Living Standard; Habit; Pattern; Cultural Change; Developmental Change; Market; Livelihood.

Baiga Demography

The Baiga tribe mainly inhabits in the states of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. A minor population is also found in the adjoining states of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha and Bihar. According to 2011 census, the total population of the Baiga tribe in India is 5,52,495 (see Table 1). The population of the Baiga tribe is 4,14,526 in Madhya Pradesh and 89,744 in Chhattisgarh. The major population of the Baiga tribe is found in Shahdol, Umaria, Singrauli, Mandla, Dindori, Anuppur, Sidhi, Balaghat, Kabir Dham, Bilaspur and Koriya districts of both the states. Sex Ratio among the Baiga in India is 993.¹ It is above the average sex ratio of the scheduled tribes in India, i.e., 990.

The Baiga Chak is situated in the Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh. It is considered to be the core region of the Baiga tribals. Its centre is Chada,

a forest village. The Baiga Chak consists of 52 villages. The whole Baiga Chak comes under two development blocks i.e. Karanjia and Samanapur. It is surrounded by Maikal hills in the east and Satpuda and Vindhyaachal hill ranges in the south.² Now, there are around 202 villages in the Baiga Chak area.

Area of Study

The study had been conducted in the Baiga villages of Dindori and Anuppur districts of Madhya Pradesh and Kawardha and Bilaspur districts of Chhattisgarh. The field work was mainly done in Karangara village of Pendra Development block of Bilaspur district, Chhattisgarh and Kharidiha village of Karanjia Development block of the Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh. The quantitative data was collected through household census survey. Qualitative data is

Table 1: State-wise Baiga Population in India.

Place	Total Population	Male	Female	Rural	Urban
India	552495	277245	275250	528802	23693
Madhya Pradesh	414526	207588	206938	394032	20494
Chhattisgarh	89744	44847	44897	88164	1580
Uttar Pradesh (Sonbhadra)	30006	15572	14434	29432	574
West Bengal	13423	6765	6658	12872	551
Jharkhand	3582	1829	1753	3439	143
Bihar	543	276	267	485	58
Odisha	338	173	165	266	72
Maharashtra	333	195	138	112	221

Source: Compiled by the Author from the State Wise Data of Census of India 2011.¹

collected through structured household interview guide schedule. For collection and cross checking of relevant qualitative data the other Baiga villages covered under study are Chaparwa and Amadob of Bilaspur district, Adchara and Polmi of Kawardha district, Sarhakona and Mekal Pahar of Anuppur district and Chada, Sheetalpani, Khapripani, Jalda, Bavna and Pachgaon of Dindori district. The villages were selected purposely depending on the availability of good number of Baiga households and the location of the villages from the exposure and developmental point of view. Both, the remote and road-side villages, near to urban centers, were carefully selected for covering the traditional as well as changing aspects of Baiga culture.

Research Methodology

The Anthropological scientific research methodology and field techniques are applied for the collection of data in the current study, such as, observation, interview, schedule, focused group discussion, case study, photography, etc. The fieldwork is done for collection of ethnographic details and cross-checking of the aspects of earlier studies. Primary information was collected with the help of structured household schedule followed by personal interview (structured interview guide), group discussion and observation. The data is collected from all the age groups of both sexes, especially through group discussion with the Baigas of older as well as younger generation. The area of study has been carefully selected for covering the traditional as well as changing aspects of Baiga culture. The ethnographic details about the traditional aspects are especially documented through interview with the old Baiga persons, traditional village headmen, old records and past studies, which are repeatedly cross-checked during

the fieldwork. Along with the quantitative data, more qualitative information has been collected regarding impact of development and cultural change coming in the life style and culture of the Baiga tribe. The gathered information from primary and secondary sources was analysed to have a detailed ethnographic account of indigenous Baiga culture and impact of development and cultural change. The data is collected from the 250 households. The changes in the various cultural traits are recorded as reported by the informants on the basis of qualitative comparison between past cultural traditions and changing/changed current cultural practices.

Baiga Culture

The Baiga call themselves the first human on earth or the- *Mati-Putra* (children of the soil). By nature they are very shy and simple in living.³ The Baiga are a Mundari or Kolarian people located in the central highlands of India.^{4,p4} The Baiga speak in Baigani and Chhattisgarhi dialects of Hindi. Baigani is recognized as a corrupt form of Chhattisgarhi. It is a dialect of Indo-Aryan Stock belonging to the Indo-European Phylum.⁵ Actually, they speak a broken form of language spoken by their Hindu neighbours. It has been also seen that the Baiga officiate as priests of the local deities. They do *jhar-phunk* and also work as medicine-men.⁶ The Kol and Gond consider the Baiga as priests having knowledge of the secrets of the region's soil. The Baiga are strong believer of magic and good medicine-men.⁷ They have sound knowledge of numerous forest herbs and medicinal plants that they use to cure diseases. The Baiga have very limited resources for livelihood and most of them, if existing are often at the subsistence level. Basically, they are shifting cultivators. Staple food item of the

Baiga is rice. *Pej* is made out of maize, wheat, *kodo* (millet) and *kutaki*. The Baiga are avid smokers. They are legendary drinkers of *Mahua* liquor. On the name of handicraft they do little basketry, broom making and wood carving. Both women and men love to decorate themselves with handmade and market made ornaments. The elaborate tattoo designs can be found on the Baigin's body for ornamental purpose. The *Jat* system found among the Baiga tribe is remarkable and it resembles with the caste system in India.⁸ The *Jats* are endogamous in nature and they are seven in number. Another characteristic of the Baiga community is polygyny. It was found during the study that a number of Baiga males had more than one wives. The reasons may be varied, but at Pachgaon Raiyyat Tola and in Karangara village the spouses were found living harmoniously.¹

Every Baiga, as we have seen, belongs to an endogamous sub-group (*Jat*), a territorial *Garh*, and a particular *Goti*. Marriages outside the sub-groups are uncommon, but there are occurrences in some of the areas like Niwas, where the Binjhar, Muria and Bhumia live side by side. In cases of inter-caste or inter-subgroup marriages and incest in the form of marriage in the same *Garh*, penalties are imposed in the form of community dinner and drinks. Sometimes it also leads to excommunication.

The division of the tribe into *Garhs* marks their geographical location and disallows them to marry within their own *Garhs* because it is considered that members of the *Garh* belong to the same lineage and own native village and thus, village exogamy is preferred. They seek wives from other *Garhs*, avoiding the nearness of the relations living in the same *Garh*, and selecting spouses from other *Garhs* whom they know less by living in distant places. Bhumia Baigas do not give much importance to *Goti*. After marriage new room or house is constructed the new couple next to the existing house of the parents and thus, Baigas mostly seems living in nuclear family though they live near to relatives like an extended or joint family.

Discussion (Current Situation and Analysis)

Living Pattern of Baiga Tribe

The Baiga live a simple life. Their demand is less; hence they manage their living with the meager articles or commodities. Their consumption is also less. Two meals a day, some drink and some smoke with a few pieces of clothes are their total requirement to live a life in the remote areas of their settlements. *Pej* (rice gruel) is their main diet, if the

other grains are not available. One *langoti* (loin cloth) and one blanket were their requirements in the past. They are used to work in the fields, collect forest produce and firewood, do labor work in the forest and in road construction, do dancing and singing in marriages and festivals, do sale of forest produce in the weekly markets and purchase of grocery items from there which marks almost their daily routine.

The Baiga young men are often strikingly handsome, slim, shapely bodies, strong, fine but gentle features, black glossy wavy hair and full with vitality.^{4,p.10} The Baigas be of medium height with strong legs. They travel a long distance in the forest. The Baiga do not trim their hair. The men tie their long hair on the left side on back of head into a knot or bun (*Jura*). Sometimes Bhumia Baiga males also shave the front part of the crown, cutting it back into a perfectly straight line. The hair is cut only by a fellow Baiga with the help of iron razor made by Agaria community. The women do not cut their hairs. The women have longer hair than the males. They generally do not wash their hair with soap. Now, the new generation of the Baiga boys has started hair-cut after coming into contact with the outside world and as an effect of modernization. The Baiga males usually keep moustache. The chin is shaved or sometimes little goatee beards are kept. Baiga women get tattooed all her exposed body parts except the soft and private parts of the body. Gradually the tradition of tattoo is declining among the Baiga women. Flash of rats are liked very much by them. They catch it and roast it in fire. They love to drink *Mahua* liquor.

Previously, the Baiga women used to wear Moongi, Kaniyar, Bagara, Chadariya, and Chaukhana Sarees woven by Panika weavers of 12 to 16 hands length. They were not using blouses. Now, they are purchasing the mill-made sarees and colorful blouses purchased from the local markets. The traditional clothes as described above are worn only on festive occasions like marriage, death, chokbarahon, festivals and during dance performance programmes. The Baiga women wear necklaces of glass beads (*Guriya Mala*) and *Bhauri Mala*, Silver necklet, *Hawal* of silver or gold coins, *Moonga baliyan* in upper lobes of ears and *Bari* in the lower lobes of ears. They also wear *Jhumaka* in ears, *nagmori* on arms, bangles of gillet on wrists, waist chain, toe rings and finger rings.

The Baiga males wrap *Langoti* (loin cloth) on waist and wear *bandi* (vest-coat) above the waist. They wear *pheta* (turban) on the head. On the occasion of son's marriage, festivals, *chaukbarho*

and dances, they wear dhoti, bandi, jacket and turban. The boys wear pant and shirt. They make a bun of their long hair; wear rings on the ear lobes and Guriyon ki Mala on the neck. There is a change in their dress pattern now. They are now wearing pant, shirt, Jeans and T-shirts. School going children wear school dresses.

Daily Routine Life

The life of a typical Baiga revolves around the forest. They live in more interior places than the Gonds. The Baigas awake early in the morning. They do not sleep for a long time because they have to attend their daily routine work. They go outside their huts, bit away from the hamlet, to their adjacent fields or nearby forest area for urinal and defecation. Traditionally, after defecation they use stone and leaves to clean themselves instead of water. Now, some of the young Baigas have started to use water for this purpose. Washing of their face and teeth in the morning is known as *Mukhari* in the local language. They do it using water just outside their houses or at the time of taking bath or fetching water at nearby sources of water. They use Datun of Sarai, Babool and neem, etc. to clean their teeth. Then they go for work after taking little breakfast, which is usually the remaining food of the last night. They prefer to complete their work in the agricultural fields and forest collection in the early morning before the sun-heat increases. Usually, women go for collection of roots, tubers and firewood in the nearby forest area. The women go with Tangiya (axe), Khanti (digging stick) and Tukni (basket) to the forest for collection. After coming back the women prepare food early in the day time. Sometimes, young children and old people also prepare food in the house. Usually, they take lunch between the morning and noon, which is known as *Murgal* in the local language. If they take meal afternoon towards the evening they call it Mariya and dinner is known as Biyari which is taken after evening drinks of Mahua liquor. Men and women both love to take drinks in Chhaka of Mehlon leaves and ceramic cups. They complete their other important works a labor works in the afternoon till evening. Before, dusk they come back to their huts. Then, they enjoy drink, dance and fire around fire. Later on they take dinner and go for sleep. Usually, they live in nuclear family, in a hut of one room divided into kitchen and living room.

The Baigas live in small hamlets, usual composed of members of a lineage. When they go for work they take their small kids with them. Small children stay with their elder sibs at home. Older people of

the hamlet and lineage or family look after all the children of the family. Children play in and around the huts or hamlet. Now days, the children go to school and spent their day there. They get mid-day meal at school. Even, parents do not take the school going children because there will be loss in their studies. It has been found that the Baiga children are still not very much interested in their studies and they quit their studies after class 5th or 8th class. Then they either play or look after the smaller children in the house. Sometimes, especially from adolescence, they also help in household and agricultural works. School going children get school dress from school and they can be found wearing that dress whole day in the Baiga villages.

The Baigas are self-contented people and cultivate their own possessed land. The women collect *mahuwa*, *char*, *philawa*, *chironji*, etc. from the forest. They also collect Mohalain leaves and prepare leaf-plates. They also make brooms of Mowa grass. They sell these items locally and earn something for their living. The Baiga earn their living by collection and sale of forest produce, collection of tendu leaves, construction of embankments (labor work), agricultural works, labor work in agricultural fields and road construction, crusher, building construction, etc. Some youth also go to the cities for jobs and earn their living. Now, a few of them are also working in service sector and government jobs.

Identity Marks in Baiga Tribe

Hair Bun of Baiga Man: The Baigas do not cut their hair. Long hair tied up into a bun is the identity mark of a Baiga man. It is only shaved at the time of Jhalar *Utarai* (mundane - shaving of first head hair) of the child which is done at an early age just after birth and at the time of death in the family. The males have strong curly black hair. They make plait of it and give the shape of a crow. The men tie their long hair on the left side on back of head into a knot or bun (*Jura*). The Baiga women also keep long hair. They have black, strong, curly hair. They do not use soap. They use mud for washing their hair. This mud is known as Mood-Misani-Mati. It is of yellow color. They do not comb their hair daily. Hence, it is not clean and sometimes stinks.

Tattoo on Baigin's body: Tattooing is significantly important in the Baiga community. The Baiga women consider it to be the main decoration for their body. It was found and believed that the tattooed woman was getting respect in her conjugal family and was getting salvation after death.

Baiga women get tattooed all her exposed body parts except the soft and private parts of the body. The tattoo symbol of *Sita-Rasoi* on the forehead of Baiga women, known as *Kapad Goday*, is the identity mark of a Baiga female. In *Kapad Goday*, they make a 'V' shaped hearth in the middle of the forehead followed by three dots (*Tipka*), two straight vertical lines (*Bedha*) and one horizontal line (*Aadha*) on both the sides of the hearth at an early age.

It is very painful to get tattooed on different parts of the body. Even though, it is painful, it is believed to be the most important ornament of the body which remains for whole life and even goes with the person even after death. It is believed that this tattoo is done with the Mantras by the *Badnin*, which can not be spoiled even by god and it appears also after rebirth in some form in some parts of the body. Tattooing gives tolerance power to the women in life and they face even the painful incidents boldly. It is also believed that it saves them from various diseases and ill-effects of the malevolent spirits.

The Baiga women wear half blouse and *Moongi sari* by which the tattooing marks on the body remains visible to others. The work of making tattoo is done by the females of *Badi* community in the Baiga area. The woman who does this tattooing work is known as *Badnin* or *Godarin*. It is necessary for every girl to get tattooed before marriage and it is the duty of the parents too. Recently, this practice of tattooing is not being considered so important and the girls are getting out of this painful practice gradually. Now, it depends upon their interest and is not strictly observed as it was in the past. Only a few dots on the forehead are tattooed by some girls today.

Food Habit

Pej (Rice gruel) is the staple food of the Baigas. Pej is made out of maize, wheat, rice, *kodo* and *kutaki*. It is the gruel of the above-mentioned grains. For Pej *Kodo-Kutaki*, rice, wheat or maize is selected on the basis of availability in the house. The selected grain is pounded heavily and cooked in the boiling water with a little salt to taste. When it is cooked then some more water is added and relished with *Bhaji* and *Chatani*.

The Baigas generally take pej of *kodo-kutaki* in lunch and *rice-bhaji* in super. When the maize crop is ripened, it makes the main item of the diet. The lunch is known as *Murgal* and the super is known as *Biyari* in their Baigani language. Normally they take two meals a day and the last food taken by them is known as *Biyari*.

The Baigas take the pej of *kodo-kutaki* and maize throughout the year. It is their main diet. They also eat *dal-bhat* (rice and pulse) and sometimes make *roti* also. They eat *moti roti* (*rotla*) of maize and wheat baked in cow-dung fire or hot charcoal which is wrapped with *Mohalain* leaves while baking in fire. *Chila* is made out of rice flour. On festive occasions, they make *pudi-sabji*; *khir*, *Bara* and *chila*.

Baiga also eat the locally available vegetables, fruits, roots and tubers (*kand-mool*). A number of leafy and other vegetables are eaten by them, such as, *Chech Bhaji*, *Charota Bhaji*, *Pakari Bhaji*, *Keylar Bhaji*, *Kosum Bhaji*, *Kachchhar Bhaji*, *Rai Bhaji*, *Chana Bhaji*, *Purpuri Bhaji*, *Gojari Bhaji*, etc. is locally available to them. The Baigas pluck the soft or tender leaves of *Chhind*, *Munaga*, *Chakoda*, *Peepal*, *Kanara*, *Khatua*, *Pakari*, *Amra*, *tamarind*, etc. and get them dried in the sunlight. When it is required to make vegetable, they boil the dry leaves in water and add salt, chilly as per the taste and eat with rice or pej. They also dry up *Mahua* flowers and make *chatani* of that, whenever required, and eat in all seasons throughout the year. They grow pumpkin, beans, drum-stick, *Torai*, *Gilak*, *Barbatti*, *Sem*, *Bhejara*, etc. in their kitchen gardens. Now, they have also started growing plants of papaya, banana, mango, jackfruit, guava, tamarind, etc. in their kitchen gardens (*Badi*) and also in the vicinity of their houses. They also collect the fruits of mango, *Bhelawa*, *Sitaphal*, *Tendu*, *Char*, *Sure*, *Kosum*, *Bui*, *Ber*, *Bel*, *Doomar* (Fig), etc. from forest. Among the *kand-mool*, they collect edible roots like the *Ratalu*, *Kaniha Kanda*, *tikhur*, *baichandi*, *lodangi kanda*, *sei kanda*, *tursi*, *kadugeerh*, *birad*, *kirchi*, *badain*, and *kurkudi kanda* from the forest. They eat and sell them in the market also. They also collect *Mahua*, *Dori*, *Chironji*, *Harra*, *Bahera*, etc. from the forest.

In rainy season, mushroom (*Putu*), *Putpura*, *Kakora*, *Bas Pihari*, *Bhondo Pihari*, *Kathhawa*, *Sarai Pihari*, *Sarai ki pihari*, *Lal Pihari*, and *Rajbhado Pihari* are also available for eating, which are collected by the Baigas from the forest for their own consumption and sale in the market. They drink black tea, milk tea and sometimes also milk of cows and buffaloes depending upon the availability.

The Baigas are non-vegetarian. They do fishing and hunting for this purpose. The hunting is banned now as it is prohibited by wild life protection act. Even forest department discourages hunting. So, it has become rare now. But, the Baigas still do hunting of rabbits, fowls, birds, deer and wild boar stealthily. They rear chicken, pig and goat. They eat mutton, chicken, pork and a variety of birds available in the forest. They hunt and trap pigeon, parrot, crows, *Bokali*, *Denchi*, *Betiya*, *Titar*, etc.

birds, but do not kill tiger, bear, Lakarbagga, cat, dog, monkey, cow, Neelkanth and Gaureya bird for eating. They also eat the boiled eggs.

The Baigas catch fish in the rainy season in running water in the streams and ponds. It is their belief that by eating fish, a person can be away from all kinds of eye diseases or it can be said that a fish eater will not have any kind of eye disease. They catch the fish named *aidha*, *samali*, *phatola*, *kotare*, *deora*, *garhani*, *phakari*, *jhimat*, etc. from the streams and ponds. They also catch tortoise, crab, *kelada*, *jhinga* for eating. They cook fish by different methods. They do not cut the small fish into pieces. They cut the big fish into pieces. The small fish are roasted in burning dry grass and eaten for a number of days.

Roasted rat is the much liked non-vegetarian food item for the Baigas. They call *moosa* to the rat locally. Moosa are also of various kinds. They eat *Balad*, *Kapariya*, *Karada*, *Tareli*, *Chitti*, *Parvat*, *Bandar Chotiya*, *Chhu-Chhu*, *Kajeli*, *Sabkati*, *Tola*, *Dudhariya*, *Bijnori*, *Ghoos*, *Gururiya* and even small rats. They first catch the rats and break their teeth and then hook it in iron rod and roast in the fire. After being roasted it is fried in oil and then cooked with rice water known as *marh*. Salt and chilly is added according to taste. The chicks of hens and crows are also cooked like this and relished with taste. It is a belief among them that by eating crow chicks the eye sight is sharpened. They bring the Banar ants found in the trees and pound them with salt and chilly and eat that *chatani* with great taste. For this, they bring the ant-hive and find there thousands of ants.

Drinking Water

The traditional source of drinking water of the Baigas is *Jhiriya* or *Jhira* (underground streams of water coming out from the holes and pits in a low quantity near the water streams, tanks and dried rivers). The pit is filled up with water which is collected by a small pot and filled in the big vessel. The source of water is nearby at some places and also far away at some other places. Now, we can see wells, hand-pumps, tanks and check-dams available as the sources of drinking water, even in the distant areas of the Baiga Chak.

Drinking Mahua Liquor (Narcotics)

The Baiga drink the Mahua liquor on all the occasions from birth to death. Usually, an adult Baiga, both men and women, drinks this everyday.

The Baigas never cut the Mahua tree. The Baigas consume Mahua liquor in *Chhaka* (leaf cup) made up of mohalain leaves. Mahua flowers are collected and dried up and then rotten for days together to prepare liquor and it is a compulsory drink for them on all festive occasions. They also greet the relatives by offering Mahua liquor. It is found in the study are that Mahua liquor is sold at the rate of Rs. 80 per bottle in the villages. Baiga prepare it and also purchase it from their neighbors.

The Baigas use to make and use the liquor of *Mahua* flower. *Mahua* liquor is specially liked by them, which is locally known as *Mand*. This liquor is used in every part of day-to-day life of the Baigas. Every function starts and ends with *Mahua* liquor. They make it through distillation process. For this purpose, they use a set of four pots, out of which, one is fitted with *Paina* (flat plate with drainage pipe) and hole at the bottom. They boil the *Mahua* flowers in one pot by putting it over *Chulha* (hearth). Over this pot, the pot with *Paina* is kept. On the top a pot of cold water is kept. In this process the boiling water with Mahua flowers gets vaporized and evaporated in to the middle pot. Here, the vapors get cooled due to the effect of the top most pot containing cold water and takes the shape of pure liquor and gets collected into the *Paina*. From *Paina* the hot liquor gets drained out with the help of an attached bamboo pipe leading to a fourth pot lying on the ground. Thus, the fresh *Mahua* liquor gets accumulated in to the fourth pot. The purest liquor received, while first initial boiling is known as *Phuli*. This is a very strong spirit. They make *Mahua* liquor in their houses as well as near the water streams in the forest.

Smoking (Narcotics)

Smoking is common among the males. They themselves prepare the smoking pipes. *Bidi* is made up of *Tendu* leaves and *Chongi* is made up of *Sarai* or *Mahloin* leaves. In both of the smoking pipes, tobacco is filled. *Bidi* is thinner in size than the *Chongi*. *Bidi* is smoked completely in one sitting, while the *Chongi* is utilized for several sittings. *Chongi* is puffed for some time, and then it is put off and hooked either on the turban or kept on any high spot in the house, so that, it may not be touched and spoiled by the children. When desired, it is again lit up and smoked. *Ganja* is rolled in mango leaves. It is more intoxicating than the *bidi* and *Chongi*. In earlier days, the Baiga were using the *Chakmak patthar* (flint) and *semar rui* (cotton) for lighting the *Bidi* or *Chongi*. Now mostly for lighting, they use match-sticks (*Machis*) easily available in the market.

Now, the Baigas are changing their drinking and smoking habits. The new generation is doing its less use and they try to avoid drinking and smoking all the time in a day or in the month. Previously, they used to consume 3–4 tins of liquor on any festive occasion. But now, the quantity has been reduced upto 1–2 tins of liquor. Their life style is thus changing. Now, in season of Mahua flower, the whole family goes for Mahua collection then they sell this in local market and grocery shops. At the time of need for making the liquor they again purchase it from the market and shops.

Inter-Community Relations

The Baigas buy many things of their day-to-day use from the weekly and *Madai* markets. The Mehera and the Panika caste people make the clothes, the Mochis make shoes and *chappals*, the Kumhars make earthen pots, the Agarias make iron implements, the Sonars make ornaments, basketry items are made by the Dhuliyas and they are the drummers also, and tattooing is done by the Badi women. The Badi women also prepare *Gudari* (grass rings) for keeping the pots. Hence, we find the involvement of a number of caste groups with whom the Baigas interact on different occasions in the markets and their living areas too. The markets are the places which provide chance for maximum interaction because it presents such a platform where they can buy, they can sell, they can exchange and also interact with them. It shows that the Baigas are not living a secluded or isolated life today. Even if the Baigas are living in separate hamlets in villages or the whole village is uniethnic, they have to depend upon other caste/tribe people to procure the things of their day-to-day needs in today's complex situation. Now, they are in regular touch with the markets and the people who supply the commodities needed for different trades and their own personal/family use. Karangara is a roadside village and its total population almost belongs to one ethnic group i.e. the Baigas. There are the regular visit of the government officials, petty traders, transport people and businessmen. The Baigas are going to towns for buying their clothes, ration, electronic items, etc. The children are studying in the schools. They are going outside in tournaments and interacting with the students of other caste groups. Hence, it can be said that the Baigas are on the way to modernization which is providing them ample chances of interaction with the other caste and tribe people.

It is found among the Baigas that whatever they purchase from the market, they make payment in

cash, but in case of Agaria, whatever they procure from them, they make the payment in kind. It shows their traditional relationships with the Agarias and it is being maintained for a longer period of time or since ages. Likewise, the Baigas have ethnic relations with the Badis. The Badi women go to their houses for tattooing of the girls. The girls get tattooed on different parts of their body since early childhood. Tattooing is not done in a single sitting, but it is done on different sittings in different parts of the body before and after marriage of the Baiga women and payment is made every time in cash and kind both.

Previously, the Baiga women used to wear Moongi, Kaniyar, Bagara, Chadariya, and Chaukhana Sarees woven by Panika weavers of 12 to 16 hands length. Still many of them wear this specially on festive occasions like marriage, death, chokbarahon, festivals and during dance performance programmes. The males wear pheta (turban) on the head, which is also made by Panikas. On the occasion of marriage, festivals, chaukbarho and dances, they wear dhoti, bandi, jacket and turban. The clothes are made by them with the help of handlooms. The Baigas go to them and purchase these traditional clothes for festive occasions. These saris are costly and heavy, so they are now purchasing mill made saris from the markets.

The Baiga women purchase ornaments of precious metals made and sold by Sonar caste people in the market. They wear Silver necklet, Hawal of silver or gold coins, Moonga baliyan in upper lobes of ears, Jhumka, Bari in the lower lobes of ears, Nagmori on arms, bangles of gillet on wrists, waist chain, toe rings, finger rings and hair clips, etc. Men and women both wear silver Suta (necklet) and chain. Men also wear Kada on their wrist. The women are also very fond of bead necklaces (Guriya Mala, Bhauri Mala) and *phundara* (colorful ribbons and flowers) which they purchase from other shopkeepers in cash from the market.

The Baiga have very intimate relations with the Gonds. Although, they do not have nuptial relations, but dine in each other's house. They attend to marriages and social functions held in each other's house and exchange gifts. They also dance together on certain occasions like marriage. Both the groups are living together in some areas and the Baigas have learnt the methods of farming from them. They have the cordial relations.

The Dhulias are the drummers. Their services are needed on most of the festive occasions. They are treated with respect. At the time of marriage they

are invited gracefully by offering a bottle of liquor and worshipped by the housewife when they reach house by washing their feet. Dhulias also do bamboo and basketry work. They make various sorts of baskets, which are again purchased and used by the Baigas. The Baigas also do animal husbandry. They rear up goats and cows. The animals of the *Tola* or village are grazed by the Ahir (a pastoral community) boys. Thus, the Ahirs provide their services to the Baigas and other communities of the village.

Conclusion

The Baigas are still very backward in terms of their economic condition and educational level and their geographical isolation has made them a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG) in India. The government is trying to bring them in the mainstream of national life by regular touch and implementation of the development programs in their areas. However, these developmental programs have both long term positive and negative effect on their culture, life style and living standards.

The Baigas are now well connected with the outside world. The roads are being constructed and many of the Baiga areas are linked with the urban centres. In studied villages, bicycle and motorbike are found in many families. They have started using train, bus, truck, jeep and car as modes of transportation. Electricity has also reached the Baiga families and villages. The solar light is visible in almost all the Baiga houses. Radio (transistor), television and mobiles are also available with them. A few Baiga families have constructed *Pucca* concrete houses with or without latrines. Thus, the traditional housing pattern of making huts in a rectangular shape followed by their agricultural fields is also changing as the Baiga population is increasing and they are coming into services, getting government aids and proper education in the schools, *ashram-shalas* and colleges, and coming in contact with the outside world, especially in the road side villages.

The Baigas are now use-through with the market economy. They sell and purchase different objects in the local markets. They get the items of daily needs, such as grocery items, vegetables, and valuables like ornaments, good dresses, saris, utensils, etc. from the weekly markets. It is the place which attracts the tribals and works as a change centre due to introduction of new items. As a result, the

change is significantly reflected in the material culture of the Baiga tribe. There are changes in the life-style and dress pattern also. The boys of new generation are wearing pant-shirt, *Pajama*, *Kamij* and the girls are wearing now frocks, jeans, *salwar-suits*, colourful blouses and saris. The students are wearing school dresses. Now, the practice of tattooing is decreasing in the new generation. Now, the hair bun, traditional identity mark of Baiga man, is almost vanished in the younger generation and is rarely found among them.

The Baigas are getting sufficient quantity of subsidized food grains and other basic articles under PDS known as *Antyodaya Yojana*. Now, the Baigas have started eating rice, *roti*, vegetable, pulses, and safe drinking water from hand-pumps and tube-wells. They like to have snacks in hotels and weekly markets. This reflects the significant change in their food habit and eating practices. Although, the Baiga youth is aware about the fact that the habit of dinking liquor is injurious to health, but there is no change in consumption of liquor among the Baigas.

The Baigas still prefer their traditional ethno-medicinal knowledge and magico-religious healing practices. *Swasthya Sahayika* (Health worker) or *Mitanins* work is present in every village for primary medical attention, child and women health awareness, vaccination, pregnancy check-ups and delivery in hospitals, etc. Still there is a lot of work to be done in health sector in Baiga areas for developing health infrastructure and health awareness. The main draw back in the Baiga society is excessive drinking of the country liquor and their dependency on the traditional healers due to shortage of modern medical facilities.

Modern day formal education is playing a significant role as major changing agent among the Baiga community and culture. It is gradually changing their outer world view and enhancing knowledge area. Many elder Baigas are now learning to write their names through adult education program and in company of school going kids. But, over all literacy rates including women literacy rate is very low. School dropout rate is very high. Most of the Baigas are taking primary and secondary level of education. Due to the increasing educational infrastructure in the Baiga area the general interest towards formal education is gradually increasing. Class 12th pass Baiga boys and girls are getting jobs as local school teachers and are being absorbed in other suitable jobs. It is again influencing the Baiga people to

send their children to schools and now even for the higher education. School going younger generation is forgetting Baigani vocabulary and feel shy in speaking Baigani in front of the outsiders. Baigani language is gradually declining and facing the danger of extinction. Now, they are using Hindi and Chhattisgarhi as major mode of communication.

Agriculture is the major source of Baiga livelihood. Now, they have become settled farmers and getting better crop yield. But, still at many places they are at subsistence level. They are using ploughs and other modern agricultural implements. They are gradually trying to employ possible modern agricultural techniques. They are also growing cash crops and doing horticulture under the government program of Wadi development. Agricultural and other labour works have become a major source of income as primary or secondary occupation. They have also got vocational training under government schemes and started trying for alternative sources of livelihood. The Baiga art and artists are getting affected by the modern day modes of communication (especially media), marketization and gradually losing its traditional

forms and essence. Now, they have made dance troupes (*Baiga Nritya Dal*) in various villages and going for performances at various places on payment basis.

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