

## **CULTURAL CHANGE AMONG THE BAIGA TRIBE OF MADHYA PRADESH AND CHHATTISGARH**

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**Abstract:** *The Baiga tribe is 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 up lift their overall situation through developmental programmes in their areas. Altogether, the Baiga culture has gradually changed due to continuous migration and impact of neighboring communities in the past and still changing due to the impact of modernization and developmental programs at present. The new generation is opting for urbanized life style after schooling and going for works outside their areas. The government officials, businessmen and outsiders who have entered in their areas have also affected their cultural and artistic life to a vast extent. Hence, it has become significant to study and document indigenous cultural traits of the Baiga tribe before they get forgotten with time or face assimilation. It is also relevant to record the associated traits of cultural change, to see the extent of cultural change and in this way to facilitate mass cultural awareness for safeguarding the pertinent cultural aspects by the Baiga community for better cultural sustainability. For this purpose, ethnographic study of Baiga culture is the focus of the present paper.*

**Key words:** *Baiga, Ethnography, Development, Cultural Change, Lifestyle, Market Economy, Education, Awareness, Empowerment.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Baiga tribe is known for its habitation, hair style, tattoo marks and ethno-medicinal knowledge all over the world. It has attracted the anthropologists, sociologists and other writers for their simplicity, traditional way of life, *Bewar* (shifting cultivation), and other cultural traits. Baiga Chak is famous to know their way of life and culture. Mr. Verrier Elwin had written in 1939 that the Baiga tribe is one of the few remaining in the Central Provinces of India that has not yet greatly affected by civilization (Elwin, 1939). This scenario is fast changing, but still seems to be true to some extent.

A significant part of their culture is lost or changed due to impact of migration, acculturation, development and change with time and space. Hence, it has become significant to study and document indigenous cultural traits of

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Baiga tribe before they get forgotten with time or face assimilation. It is also relevant to record the associated traits of cultural changes to see the extent of cultural change and in this way to facilitate mass cultural awareness for safeguarding the pertinent cultural aspects, by the Baiga community, for better cultural sustainability. This paper deals with the ethnographic study of Baiga culture and situational analysis of development and cultural change among the Baiga people carefully keeping in mind that their culture is at the verge of transition.

### **AREA OF STUDY**

The Fieldwork is done in the Baiga villages of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The Field work is done mainly in the Dindori and Anuppur districts of Madhya Pradesh and Kawardha and Bilaspur districts of Chhattisgarh. The Baiga villages covered are Karangara of Bilaspur district, Adchara and Polmi of Kawardha district, Sarhakona and Mekal Pahar of Anuppur district and Chada, Sheetalpani, Khapripani, Jalda, Bavna, Pachgaon and Kharidiha 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 towns, are selected to see the extent of cultural change.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The Anthropological research methodology and field techniques are applied for the collection of data in the current study. 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.

### **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. It extends from about 22° to 24° N and 80° to 82° E. 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 (Soni, Baiga - A Visual Ethnography, 2015). It is above the average sex ratio of the scheduled tribes in India, i.e., 990.

**Table 1**  
**State-wise Baiga population in India**

<i>Place</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban</i>
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 first author from the state wise data of census of India 2011

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. Karanjiya and Samanapur. It is surrounded by Maikal hills in the east and Satpuda and Vindhya hills in the south (Chaurasiya, 2009). Now, there are around 202 villages in the Baiga Chak area.

### **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 (Forsyth, 1871). The Baiga are a Mundari or Kolarian people located in the central highlands of India (Elwin, 1939, p. 4). 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 (Grierson, 2005). 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 (Elwin, 1950). 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 (Tiwari, 1997). 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 (Sharma, 2012). 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 (Soni, 2015).

#### DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

Change is inevitable in any social situation. Development and change are two interconnected phenomena of any living society and it is sure that there will be a change in time and space. Change may be slow or fast. When the change is slow it gives the feeling of permanency, but it is always not the same. Development has an intimate relation with the process of change. It may be positive or negative. When it is positive, it is termed as development and when it is negative, it causes deterioration and sometimes loss of the culture also. It is also the opinion of the social scientists that change may be natural, but development is more or less due to introduction of some programmes or actions taken to achieve the desired goals.

Any living society is not static. Development and change are two vital aspects of the socio-economic and politico-religious life of the people (Upadhyay & Pandey, 2010). From First to Ninth Five Year Plan, there were different plans and programmes for the development of the scheduled tribes of India and they are still continuing, so that we observe a lot of changes among the Baigas of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh.

Earlier, the Baiga was a nomadic tribe practicing shifting cultivation. Basically, they were hunter, gatherers and shifting cultivators residing in the

remote hilly and forest tracts of Maikal hill ranges at the bordering areas of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Later on, they became settled agriculturists by implementation of the government plans and policies during the British rule and it continued in the post-independent India.

Baiga culture has gradually changed due to continuous migration and impact of neighboring communities in the past and still changing due to impact of modernization and developmental programs at present. The new generation is opting for urbanized life style after schooling and going for works outside their areas. The government officials and businessmen who have entered in their areas have also affected their cultural and artistic life to a vast extent.

### **SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS**

The Baigas are living in the hilly forest tracts in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The roads are being constructed and many of the Baiga areas are linked with the urban centres. Although the roads are motorable, but mostly these are being utilized by the government officials, contractors and businessmen who have got some projects and duties to be performed in those areas. Roads are very important because people can reach them and work for the implementation of development programmes for them. The government is constructing CC Roads, *Pucca* approachable roads, Culverts, Community Halls, *Anganwadi* buildings and PTG *Awas* in the tribal areas. The government is implementing so many development programmes in PTG areas like awareness camps for health, tube well with pumps for irrigation, land levelling and distribution of mini kits for agriculture, help for piggery and poultry farming, beehive keeping, etc. The government is also organizing vocational training for the Baiga people in basketry and other skills. Hand pumps and wells are being constructed along with electrification for the welfare of the tribal communities.

### **Habitation**

The needs of the Baigas are very little. They have enough land for their housing. In some of the areas their houses are scattered and made in their fields or near to their fields. It provides them round o' clock vigil over their fields and standing crops. In some areas they live in small hamlets where social solidarity is found among them. They help each other in socio-religious and economic matters. On roadsides, the changes are enormous in their life-style because they are interacting with outsiders regularly. They are hardly living in the mixed villages, but at some places the Gonds are seen with them participating in their marriages and other rituals. In earlier days, the Baigas of one extended family or lineage were supposed to make their huts in a rectangular shape,

which was followed by their agricultural fields all around. Nowadays, the Baigas living in a hamlet make their huts along the road in a queue, especially in the roadside villages.

Now, the Baigas are using asbestos sheets and tiles in place of grass in their roofs. A few Baigas are making bricks and tiles. They have received training as *Raj-mistri*, trained in making of bricks and tiles under the government training program. A few Baigas have got government grant under the *Indira Awas Yojna* and *Mukhyamantri Awas Yojna* for making *Pucca* houses. They have also got grant-in-aid under a government sanitation scheme for making toilet in their houses. They have constructed concrete latrines with pots and pit-holes adjacent to their houses. Though, in many villages these toilets are not functional being incomplete without roof and walls. Moreover, this kind of sanitation habit is not in practice or popular among the Baigas and there is also lack of water supply for its maintenance. Though during fieldwork, a few educated Baigas were found utilizing this modern sanitation system. It is also observed during the fieldwork that after getting formal education and government jobs or private services, a few Baiga families have constructed *Pucca* concrete houses with or without toilets.

### **Agriculture**

The Baiga used to do slash and burn cultivation in the past which was locally known as *Bewar*. In this system, they used to cut down the trees and bushes in the forest and let them dried in the sun. When dried, it was being burnt by firing. Thus, the ashes used to get spread over the land. When the showers came, they used to sow the crops of *kodo-kutaki* (millet), paddy, and maize. Now, they have stopped slash and burn cultivation and doing settled agriculture and living permanently in the villages or in their own settlements separately. This is a change from sedentary way of life to settled way of life in the villages. Under a Government scheme of distribution of agricultural implements the Baigas got benefited in a few villages and for irrigation they have been provided with diesel pumps.

Now, they are having bullocks and ploughs for tilling the land and they get good crops. The government has provided under the scheme, fully iron made ploughs which they do not find of much use. Sri Kejuram Baiga of Adchara village is also having a tractor and trolley which is utilized both for agriculture and as a means of transportation for goods and villagers on payment basis.

Seeds and insecticides are distributed under government scheme for agriculture, which has raised the crop yield in the Baiga villages. Levelling of

the agricultural fields had been done in a few villages under the *Mahatma Gandhi Rojgar Garanti Yogna* (MANREGA), during the non-agricultural season. Now, the plough, digging stick, crow bar, *Kudal*, *Phawada*, *Gaiti*, *Tagari*, etc. are provided by the government under the *Krishi Yantra Vitran* scheme, which is seen to be utilized by the Baigas very well. For better irrigation facilities to Baiga farmers, Stop-dam, Check-dam, Anicut, and Rain water Shed, etc. are made under the government projects in the study areas.

### **Food habit**

The Baigas are getting sufficient quantity of subsidized rice, wheat, sugar, pulses, gram, salt, etc. under Public Distribution System (PDS) known as *Antyodaya Yojana*. In Karangara village, the Baigas have reported to get 35 kgs. of rice each family per month. Now, apart from *Pej* (rice gruel), they have started eating rice, *roti*, vegetables, pulses, etc. Previously, they used to collect drinking water from rivers, water streams and *Jhira*, but now there are a good number of hand-pumps and tube-wells in the Baiga areas. The Baigas are now growing papaya, banana, mango, jackfruit and other fruit plants in their courtyard and kitchen gardens. Now, they are also using the milk. They like to have snacks in hotels and weekly markets. This reflects the significant change in their food habit and eating practices. They are very fond of taking Mahua liquor on all the occasions along with their relatives and guests. So, there is no change in consumption of liquor among the Baigas. Though, the Baiga youth is aware about the fact that the habit of dinking liquor is injurious to health and disturbs the family economy tremendously.

### **Market**

The Baiga derive most of their needs from the jungle. Wood and forest produce are the main earnings for them. They sell the firewood in the nearby places and markets and earn some money. They lead a very simple life. Their needs are less. They have a few clothes to cover their body. Food grains are also scanty and some of the spices they get from the weekly markets. Utensils are also quite less in their houses. They travel a long distance to collect the household and cooking materials on the market days. Now, they buy the clothes, ornaments and beauty aid-ups from those markets. Hence, the local weekly village markets have an important role to play in their life. They get the items of daily needs, such as, grocery items, vegetables, clothes, utensils, ornaments, kerosene oil, etc., from the weekly markets. They purchase dry fish, roasted gram, *Parmal*, *Lai*, *Mithi Sev*, etc. from the market. They also purchase the cosmetics items from the market. It is also the source for procuring soap, ribbon, necklaces, bangles, combs etc. Hotels and betel shops also become

the places of attraction for them because they can purchase and eat something after a long travel from their villages to the market. The market is the place where the tribals come in their best possible attire and outfits. It is the place which attracts the tribals and works as a change centre due to introduction of new items either in dress material or consumption of the food items.

There are *Madai* markets also. These are filled once in a year at one place and it has got religious significance. *Madai* markets are as normal as the weekly markets and they are held in the month of February every year. The people belonging to Gond, Baiga, Panika tribes and Ahir caste people celebrate it. They purchase peacock feathers and tie that in a beautiful manner on a bamboo stick. It is established one day before the market day in the courtyard of the house with a ritual worship on the Devi Chaura. This *Madai* is taken to the market by the headman of the family with accompaniment of a band party and make round of the market. They stay there for some time and bring back to the house and establish the *Madai* in the *Chaura*. After a day of the market day it is dismantled with a ritual worship. This *Madai* is kept to fulfil their wishes and to bring good luck to the family members.

The author visited the *Madai Mela* (fair) at *Chada* weekly market on Saturday, the 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2015, which is a core area of the Baiga tribals. It was a big market and a lot of Baiga people came to this market for purchase of ornaments, clothes, *Manihari* items and other items of their day to day use. It was observed that there are a lot of changes in the dress pattern of the Baiga males and females. The males had worn *dhoti* and *salukha*. Some of the Baiga males, especially the youth, were seen wearing modern dress - pants and shirts. The females were well-dressed in *dhoti*, *lugda* and saris and had *Phundara* (ribbons and woollen bolls) in their hair bun and beautiful tattoo marks all over the body. Tattoo is the main identification of a Baiga girl / woman. They do not get pierced their nose, so they do not wear any nose ornament. It is a taboo among them. But, now a few educated girls of the road side villages have started wearing nose ring, which is still not acceptable to the elderly Baigas. The females were wearing a lot of silver ornaments like *Suta* (necklet), *Nagmori* (serpentine armlet), *Toda*, *Pairi*, *Haraiyya*, *Kaldar*, fingers rings, *Mangalsutra*, etc. There were ten to twelve *Sonar* (Goldsmith) businessmen selling their ornaments in the market. Some of the shops had a big crowd of customers. It was seen that some of the goldsmiths had engaged Baiga persons in their shops to attract and convince the Baiga customers. Lastly, these Baiga middlemen are paid some amount for their services in the market at the end of the day. The shopkeepers had come there in their own or hired cars. There were shops for the utensils, toys, vegetables, grocery, food items (hotels), musical instruments like *dholak*, and purchase and sale of forest produce like



*Mahua, Sal-bija, Harra, Bahera, char, chironji, glue, etc.* The weekly markets are normally held at afternoon and continue till dusk. Since the Baiga come from the long distances, they start early from the market.

### **Socio-Cultural Lifestyle and Material Culture**

There are changes in the life-style. The boys of new generation are wearing pant-shirt, *Pajama, Kamij* and the girls are wearing now frocks, colourful blouses and sari. The students are wearing school dresses. They are now purchasing plastic materials for their household use. They purchase gold and silver ornaments, artificial jewellery, earrings, and bangles of their choice. The market is the centre for availability of almost all kinds of materials needed for day to day use and also the valuables like ornaments, good dresses, saris, utensils, etc.

Change in material culture also affects the socio-cultural life. Previously, the Baigas were very shy and timid. They used to hide in the forest or bushes by seeing the outsiders. But, now, due to the regular contacts with the government officials, they do not flee away from the village and meet with the people. The children who are going to the schools are working as change agents to some extent.

On festive occasions and fairs, women members adore themselves beautifully. Tattooing is their identity-marker. The Baiga women have '*Kapad Goday*' in their forehead at an early age. Now, the practice of tattooing is decreasing in the new generation. Now, even the tattoo on forehead is avoided by the young girls going to the schools. The women are very fond of ornaments. *Suta* (silver necklet) and *Mangalsutra* have become a common wear among the married women along with their traditional flat silver bangles. The Baigas, both man and women, love to drink *Mahua* liquor on all the occasions and especially when there is any social ceremony. Now, the hair bun, traditional identity mark of Baiga man, is almost vanished in the younger generation and rarely found among the elder generation.

### **Economic Condition**

The Baigas have now become settled farmers and getting better crop yield. But, still at many places they are at subsistence level. They are also working as agricultural labour. They are also engaged in other labour work as major source of income as primary or secondary occupation as other tribes of the Chhattisgarh state (CHIPS, 2005). The government is running the Skill Development Program in tribal areas. The Baigas of Gourella Janapad Panchayat were provided training in brick making from 2009 to 2015 and also

they were distributed the kits. Basketry, sewing and making leaf cups and plates were also taught to them as a craft. Raising of *Lac*, beehive-keeping, training of *Rajmistri* and Carpenter are other training programmes run from time to time in tribal areas. Along with training, they are also provided the kits, so that, they can earn something and get their livelihood. They have got also financial help to start *Kirana* (grocery) shops.

### Education

Now, the schools are also playing the role of change-agents. There are a number of primary, middle and high schools in the tribal areas. They are also within the reach of the Baiga tribals in some places. The Baiga children were found going to schools in a couple of places during the author's visit to Baiga areas. There is a primary school at Sarahakona in Anuppur district. The concrete building of primary school is about ½ kilometer away from the main road. The school building is situated below the Baiga settlement. Its president is Santu Baiga. Birjhi Bai Baiga belonging to *Marabi Goti* serves there as an attendant and cooks the mid-day meal. There were in total 34 students in the session 2014-15, out of which 11 students were Baiga. At Mekal Pahar in Pushparajgarh tehsil of Anuppur district in Madhya Pradesh, there were Baiga students in the school and there was a concrete (*Pucca Bhawan*) structure for school building.

There is an *Adivasi Balak Ashram* at Karangara which is exclusively for the Baiga boys. One of the teachers of the Ashram-Shala belongs to the Baiga tribe and one peon is also of Baiga tribe. There are 50 students in this school. Karangara is a big village on the roadside and falls in the Bilaspur district. It is in the border of the Anuppur district of Madhya Pradesh. There are about 120 houses of the Baiga families in this village. The students go to other Ashram-Shala which is meant for the middle school boys after passing from this primary school. There are *Ashram-Shalas* also for the High School and Higher Secondary students in the states of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. The Baiga students are receiving education and gradually coming in the government services. Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak is also opened at Lalpur village near Podaki, Pushparajgarh to provide better avenues of higher education to the tribal students of this remote area.

The children are now studying in the local schools. They are also studying in the boarding schools (*Ashram-Shalas*). The students are mixing with the other students and participating in different school activities and game competitions. They are visiting the new places. So, they are interacting with other students and teachers. At some places, the parents are also getting the benefit of adult education. They are getting the government services, mostly

teaching jobs after passing 12<sup>th</sup> class. It was also informed that one boy has done his post-graduation also.

The literacy rate among the scheduled tribe population of India is 58.96% (round off 59%), out of which 68.53% are males and 49.35% are females. The scheduled tribe literacy rate in Chhattisgarh is 59.1%, out of which 69.7% are male and 48.8% are female. The scheduled tribe literacy rate in Madhya Pradesh is 50.6%, out of which 59.6% are male and 41.5% are female. (Census, 2011).

In the study area, 58 percent Baigas were found uneducated. Though many of them are now learning to write their names through adult education program and in company of school going kids. New generation is more inclined towards formal education. In Chhattisgarh, literacy rate among Baigas is 32.17 percent, out of which 62.15 percent are males and 37.85 percent are females. In Madhya Pradesh, literacy rate among Baigas is 38.3 percent, out of which 59.8 percent are males and 40.2 percent are females. Over all literacy rate including women literacy rate is very low. School dropout rate is very high. Due to the increasing educational infrastructure in the Baiga area the general interest towards formal education is gradually increasing. Class 12<sup>th</sup> pass Baiga persons are getting job as local school teachers and other suitable jobs, which is again influencing the Baiga people to send their children to the school and now even for the higher education.

### **Art Tradition**

Performing art tradition of a community is true reflection of its culture and sometimes even becomes identity marker of a particular society. Performing art is an integral part of intangible cultural heritage of a society. The Baiga dance and songs are custodians of their fast vanishing cultural traditions. The prevalent dance forms of the Baiga area are *Karma*, *Bilma*, *Rina*, *Sua*, *Jaharpat*, etc. Baiga sing, *Dadaria* and *Karma* songs (Elwin, 1951). The *Parghouni Hathi* dance is fast vanishing from the Baiga marriages (Mahawar, 2014). They have stopped this tradition. It is now only found in few interior Baiga villages in Baiga Chak area. The Baigas are getting exposures and performing their dances at national level in various cultural programs organized by different institutions. They have made dance troops (*Baiga Nritya Dal*) at various villages, such as Sheetalpani, Dhurkuta, Bavana, etc. and going for performances at various places on payment basis. This is an additional source of income for them. They have also devised a uniform dress for the whole troupe, as an identity mark. Their dancing style is also changed as per the requirement of the modern stages at auditoriums and amphitheatres. Day by day, they are developing as professional artists. But, the present marketization of the art

and the artist is hampering the traditional artistic patterns, dancing styles, songs and handicraft. There is a change and also impact of the media on various dances of the Baiga tribe.

### **Language**

The children have learned Hindi and English besides their Baigani language and now they are using Hindi and Chhattisgarhi as the major mode of conversation and communication. Baigani language is gradually declining and facing the danger of extinction. It is the need of the time to preserve Baigani language and vocabulary. A few government institutions including the Centre for Endangered Languages at Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (Madhya Pradesh) is trying to document the Baigani language, vocabulary and oral traditions.

### **Transport and Communication**

In studied villages, bicycle is found in many families and some families have motor cycles also. One family of a school teacher had a car also in Karangara village. One family is having a tractor. The Baigas now also avail the bus facility at some places. They travel by train. Thus at present, there is no complete isolation of the tribe. They promote the girls' education among the Baigas. The girl students studying at middle school and upper middle school got bicycles from the government under *Balika Saikil Vitran Yojna* in Chhattisgarh.

Most of the villages are now connected with *Pucca* roads. Radio (transistor), television and mobiles are also available with them. They are also getting the outside news and interacting with their co-brethren living in the distant places. The Baigas like to see films and videos. In Madhya Pradesh, in Dindori district, at Chada in Baiga Chak, there is a *Samudayik Radio Kendra* (Community Radio – supported by *Vanya*) from where the radio programmes are broadcasted on the name of Vanya Radio. Here, apart from Hindi, Baigani songs, dramas and other programmes are broadcasted.

### **Electrification and Light**

Electricity has also reached the Baiga families and villages. Where there is no electric pole, there is the arrangement of solar light. The government has provided necessary help in this regard. The solar lantern is visible in almost all the Baiga houses.

In *Lok Suraj Abhiyan* (April 2015), it was decided that in Kabirdham district of Chhattisgarh the Baiga dominated 10 villages in Bodla and 10 villages in

Pandariya blocks will be provided clean drinking water through bore fitted with water pump operated by solar energy and those villages will be developed as *Adarsh Baiga Gram*. The villages earmarked were Kabaratola, Mahali, Boria, Salgi, Sajatola, Dadai, Guthali, Bachurukonha, Machiyakonha and Mudwahi in Bodla Development Block and Birhuldiha, Kushiya, Madidabara, Andhuyar-Khoh, Putputa, Damgarh, Mathhpur, Newur, Polmi and Kamthhi in Pandhariya Development Block. It was decided to provide pipe line connection for water supply to 100 families in each block (Nai Duniya, 2015).

### **Political Condition**

There are three levels of Panchayat – Jila, Janpad and Gram Panchayat. Gram Panchayat does the arrangement of drinking water, road, pool, care of the communal property, fairs and festivals, health and sanitation, arrangement of ration shops and other social works. There are Baiga *Panchs* in the Baiga dominated villages. Gradually, awareness regarding modern political system and interest in modern day politics is developing in the Baiga community. The author found the politically aware Baiga Panchs in all the studied villages. But, the Baigas are still found politically less sound than the Gonds, which is the dominating tribal group of the area. The role of traditional panchayat is gradually declining now, but it still plays a significant role in case of marriages, divorce, adultery, property disputes, small quarrels and celebration of village level festivals.

### **Health and Medical Facilities**

Now, Primary Health Centres (PHCs), Community Health Centres (CHCs) have been opened in the Baiga areas. The doctors also pay visit to Baiga villages on Tuesdays of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> weeks of the month and make awareness among the tribals. Medical camps are organized periodically. The medical check-up of the students is done in the *Ashram-Shalas* regularly in every month. Vaccination camps are organized regularly in Baiga areas. *Swasthya Sahayika* (Health worker) or *Mitanins* work in every village for primary medical attention, child and women health awareness, pregnancy checkups and delivery in hospitals, etc. Still there is a lot of work to be done in health sector in Baiga areas. The Baigas are traditional healers and they still prefer their traditional ethno-medicinal knowledge and magico-religious healing practices. Though every Baiga neither do the work of medicine-man (*Baidh*) nor does *jhar-Phuk* as *Guniya*. Only a few persons do these sorts of works in every Baiga village and they are considered very prestigious. Thus, it may be concluded that the Baigas are changing gradually and they are availing the modern medical treatment facilities.

### Women Empowerment

The Baiga is a patrilineal society having the practice of polygyny. The Baiga women can not become part of traditional Baiga *Panchyat* or work as village priest or *Guniya/ Panda*. The men and women share somewhat equal part in every sphere of life. The Baiga women also play very important part in decision making in family. Due to empowerment of the women, they are doing progress in the educational, political and social areas. They are being elected as *Panch* and other office bearers. In ration cards, the women are counted as the Head of the family in Chhattisgarh. The women are working as *Mitanin* and helping to the government. They are also working in the *Anganwadi* centres. They have made self-help groups and prepare food in *Anganwadi* centres and *Ashram-Shalas*. They prepare the mid-day meals in the schools. Thus, the Baiga women are gradually becoming economically, politically and educationally empowered.

### Summing Up

The Baigas are still backward in terms of their economic condition and educational level and their geographical location has made them a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG) in India. The government is trying to uplift their overall position by implementation of the development schemes in their areas on their culture, life style and living standards, which are as follows:

1. 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 is found in many families. The girl students studying at middle school and upper middle school got bicycles from the government under *Balika Saikil Vitran Yojna* in Chhattisgarh. Many families have motor cycles also. They have started using train, bus, truck, jeep and car as modes of transportation.
2. 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.
3. The Baigas are now operating 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.

4. 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.
5. 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.
6. The Baiga art forms and artists are getting affected by the modern modes of communication (especially media), marketization and in the process gradually its traditional forms and essence are faded out. Now, they have made dance troupes (*Baiga Nritya Dal*) in various villages and going for performances at various places on payment basis. This is an addition as alternative source of income. Though, the numbers of dance and song troupes are increasing, but still there is lack of awareness for cultural preservation.
7. 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.

8. 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.
9. 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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.
10. The role of traditional panchayat is gradually declining. But, still it plays significant role in case of marriages, divorce, adultery, property disputes, small quarrels and village level festivals. Gradually, awareness regarding modern political system and interest in modern day politics is developing in the Baiga community. The author found the politically aware Baiga Panchs in all the studied Baiga villages.
11. The Baiga women are now getting empowered in all spheres of life. Though they have important role in family decision making, but, they still are dominated by the males. Now, they are being elected as



Panchs and other office bearers. Thus, the Baiga women are gradually getting economic, political and educational empowerment.

Keeping the above context within purview, it may be concluded that the ethnographic museums, various research organizations and socio-cultural institutions may play a significant role in the preservation of sustainable values and documentation (Soni, 2012) of Baiga culture and anthropologists and other scholars from relevant disciplines can play an active role in generating mass awareness about the such values, aesthetic sensibilities, and the sustainable knowledge systems of the tribes who are passing through a rapid phase of transition.

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