

UNHEARD VOICES: ESSENCE OF BAIGAS WOMEN, MYTHS, FOLKLORES AND SACRED GROVES

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ABSTRACT

Baigas, Bhumijas, Bhumiya, the aborigines of the central India, are unique in their fundamental philosophy of nature and earth worship. They regard themselves as 'Bhumiputras' or 'son of mother earth,' and this notion is a core constituent of Baigas' spiritual ideology. Their affinity to nature and the perception of female entity in nature immediately brings them in the purview of ecological feminism, and calls into examination (a) the connections between women and nature in Baiga society, (b) the role of women in Baiga society and (c) the ways both nature and women are treated by patriarchal (or male-centered) society. Further, the sacred groves of Baigas carry dual significance. First, they represent one of the original indigenous religious belief systems of tribal India. Second, they present the site for the Baiga's commitment to environmentalism. Baigas, regarded as the myth keepers of the tribal world, take the metaphysical conceptions of the origin of universe and their role in it rather seriously. Baigas physical spaces and population are already declared endangered (PVTG group) due to encroaching urbanity. Now their worldview, cult and doctrines are getting threatened because of their increasing interaction with modernization, education and technology. On the basis of these premise, the proposed paper is an examination of the Baiga belief system at the conceptual level, and the role of women, within and outside of this system, at the practical level. The environment chosen for the study are the blocks and villages of Baiga abundant Dindori Mandala and Balaghat districts of Madhya Pradesh. This research is an effort that also aims to understand and find ways to secure this ancient belief system.

KEYWORDS: PVTG, Baiga-Chak, The Supreme Soul, Sacred Groves, Adivasi

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