

A Study of the Baiga Women's Tradition of Tattoos, Modernization of this Art, and Situation of Tattoo Industry in India

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Abstract

The Polynesian term "Ta," which signifies hitting something, or the Tahitian word "tatau," according to some anthropologists, may be the source of the word "tattoo." It is "to mark something." Since before the start of the Christian era (CE), tattooing—a kind of bodily modification—has been ingrained in the cultures of many indigenous tribes worldwide. It is also demonstrated by anthropological evidence of various tattoo designs from various cultures that tattooing originated independently in many parts of the world. For various tribes across the nation, getting tattoos has always been an essential aspect of daily life. Tattoos are considered an essential component of the culture and history of the Baiga tribe's women. With the tribal people of Central India, tattooing, sometimes referred to locally as "Godna," is a common form of body art that has deep cultural significance. In this work, the importance of tattoo culture among the women of the Baiga tribe in central India is discussed and examined. This study aims to provide an overview of the Baiga tribe the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of Central India. It also explains the tattooing process, from the development of the indelible ink to the tattoo artist's application of the ink into the skin's dermis layer. At present, this art has been modernized to a great extent and the tattoo industry has become a major identity all over the world. At the same time, it has spread to many states in India as well. There are immense possibilities of development in this field in the future.

Keywords: Tattoo industry, Godna, Baiga tribe, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (P.V.T.G.)

Introduction

Many tribal societies across the world have adopted tattoos as a form of creative body modification. These are created by putting permanent ink inside the skin's dermis layer to alter the pigmentation of the skin. In September 1991, in the Ötztal Alps, on the border between Austria and Germany, a well-preserved natural mummy of a man believed to have lived approximately 3,300 BCE was discovered. It revealed more than forty-six tattoos on its body. It is evidence that one of the first tattoo cultures in human civilization exists. The idea that tattooing did not start in one spot and instead spread independently over the world is further supported by anthropological evidence of varied tattoo styles and designs found in many cultures. As per the Oxford English Dictionary, the term "tattow," "tatau," or "tattaow" could be the origin of the word "tattoo." Over time, the English word "tatau," which was originally a borrowed word, evolved into "tattoo." A team of anthropologists claims that the Polynesian term "Ta," which means "to strike

something," or the Tahitian word "tatau," which means "to mark something," are the possible sources of the word "tattoo." According to some, tattooing originated from the word "tato," which means "strike." This helps to explain the practice.

Review of Literature

A.K. Singh and R. Mishra (2019) explained that One way to describe human existence is as a never-ending quest for self-identity. Because humans are social animals and must be a part of a larger society to thrive, individual identity is crucial for integration into peer groups. For these reasons, since prehistoric times, human cultures have produced visual markers that are part of these marked bodies and tell stories about the individual and the community. Perhaps the initial impulse to mark their bodies with scars, piercings, and tattoos sprang from this hunt for visible indicators. The tradition of tattooing expanded to serve a wide range of functions as civilizations got more complex and diverse. The purpose of tattooing has evolved from being only semantic to include aesthetic and spiritual goals. Over the years, tattoos have served a variety of purposes, including marking life transitions, social status and rank symbols, spiritual and religious imagery, hunting and combat accomplishment insignia, sexual virility and fertility display, protective talismans for love and luck, and much more. But nothing about tattooing had to do with significance or originality. Criminals, slaves, misfits, and minorities were among the groups who were brutally marked with tattoos as a means of identification. This research paper will focus on the Baiga tribe's tattooing practices, significance, and beliefs. It will center on the function that tattoos have in Baiga communication.

N. Sharma (2016) describes that Tattooing is thought to be an art form in which permanent designs are created on the skin by creating punctures and applying pigment. In tribal civilizations, tattoos are an integral part of one's life, identity, and culture rather than just a kind of "art." Since ancient times, the tattooing technique has been common in about every society, and the meanings they transmit depend on a variety of sociocultural, political, and economic factors. In certain societies, tattoos were meant to symbolize a person's social standing or significant life events; in other cultures, however, they may represent a person's bravery, beauty, or spirituality. On the other hand, it may also be seen as a symbol of a person's standing in a relationship, such as a seal of servitude, or as a mark of their kinship or tribe. They are also thought to have therapeutic and medical purposes. However, Individuals with traditional tattoos may frequently be viewed as "primitive." This research paper aims to challenge this notion and highlight the intricate nature of traditional tattoos in northern and northeastern India.

M.M. Rohith and others (2020) says that Tattoos are any number of skin markings created by impregnating the epidermis of the skin with different pigments. Tattoos are utilized for positive identification and are regarded as secondary identification indicators in forensic science. Indian society is a distinctive fusion of contemporary and traditional social and religious customs. Thus, among the numerous tribal tribes and reserved castes dispersed throughout India, traditional tattoos are still rather common. Tribal affinities can be ascertained from the tattoos, which can help with forensic identification. However, in urbanized India, tattoos with Western-inspired motifs and those where people progressively appropriate indigenous designs are growing in popularity.

K. Sahu and D.N. Khunty (2017) describe that The tattoo is one of the primary decorative elements of Bastar since it is believed to lead to heaven after death. In the tribal society of Bastar, getting a tattoo is seen as a ticket to paradise. The primary belief among the tribal people of Bastar is that a lady who does not have a tattoo can never enter paradise. One of the world's most tattooed tribes is the Baiga tribe from

Bastar. Both physical adornment and archaic spiritual ideas are reinforced by tattoos. The most advanced type of tattooing is called a tattoo. The main goal of selecting the topic of tattooing in Bastar is to increase awareness of the practicality (usage) of the practice.

K.B. Mohanta (2013) explains that Numerous tribal groups with rich cultural traditions reside in Central India. These tribes employ godna, or tattoos, as a significant artistic medium to express their creativity through body decoration. The central Indian tribes' body ornamentation has additional meanings in addition to being limited to their bodies. It has a lot to do with various facets of their culture and way of life. It is somewhat related to their sexual behavior, money, social standing, healthcare practices, and religion or belief system. The focus of this paper is on demonstrating the significance of tattoos in the daily lives and cultures of the Indian tribes in the central regions.

Y. Baghel and G. Patil (2022) describes an anthropological investigation which was conducted to examine the effects of government development projects on indigenous knowledge and tribal culture in the core zone of the Achanakmar - Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve (AABR). For this reason, Sarasdol, Tilaidabara, and Chhirhatta—three unrehabilitated villages in the AABR core zone with the highest Baiga population as of the 2011 census—were chosen. To compare and track the evolution of traditional culture and practices throughout time, the Baiga community of the selected hamlet was interviewed in three age groups. By contrasting the generations' levels of adaptability, the data was analyzed. The survey's findings show that there have been substantial changes to indigenous knowledge and customs. Because of the impact of foreign culture and newly developed technologies, All generations now prefer contemporary styles because of the impact of foreign culture and new technologies brought in through various government initiatives. Furthermore, by adding facilities, it has caused the Baiga tribe's traditional wisdom to deteriorate. This study looked at how the Baiga tribe of the core zone has changed their long-standing customs. The outside culture's intrusion and the communication gaps between the two succeeding generations were the main causes that were found. Due to their exposure to modern culture and its ease of living, the younger generation was not prepared to embrace their traditional knowledge. As a result, people no longer understand how to use conventional therapeutic methods or how to recognize different valuable plants that were not passed down to the next generations.

A. Johnson (2020) says in his work that Various skin markings created by impregnating the skin's epidermis with a variety of colors are referred to as tattoos. Tattoos are utilized for positive identification and are regarded as secondary identification indicators in forensic science. Indian culture is a distinctive fusion of traditional and contemporary social and religious customs. As a result, traditional tattoos are still common among the several scheduled castes and tribal cultures that are dispersed throughout India. Tribal affinities can be ascertained from the tattoos, which can help with forensic identification. However, in urbanized India, tattoos with Western-inspired motifs and those where people progressively appropriate indigenous designs are growing in popularity.

Over the seven continents, tattooing has been discovered to be a common cultural practice among a large number of tribal tribes. Tattoos have been worn for a variety of reasons, by both indigenous people and those who ape them. However, whether it serves as a talisman, holy symbol, indication of religious identification, or demonstration of spiritual Tattooing has been a component of tribal culture for many years, and it has a deep relationship to the ecology of tribal communities all over the world, whether for reasons of dedication or for other reasons. The men and women of the tribal people of China, Borneo, Cambodia, Japan, the Mentawai Islands, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, and other countries have

been more likely to have various tattoo designs that represent social, cultural, and spiritual beliefs. Taiwan and certain other regions of the globe since ancient times.

For many Indian tribes, body ornamentation through tattooing has also been an essential aspect of their art and culture. Through distinct tattoo styles and designs, individuals convey a variety of cultural, social, and spiritual values and beliefs. The indigenous populations of Madhya Pradesh, as well as other parts of India, have a long history of using tattoos as a form of body ornamentation. The tattoos are an essential component of the social, cultural, and spiritual rituals of the women belonging to the Baiga tribe in Madhya Pradesh. Known as Godna locally, the Baiga women adorn their bodies with symbolizing social, cultural, and spiritual meanings from childhood to various stages of life. This research paper investigates the mythology surrounding, the practice of, and the significance of tattooing the life of a Baiga lady from social, cultural, religious, and spiritual perspectives.

Objective of the study

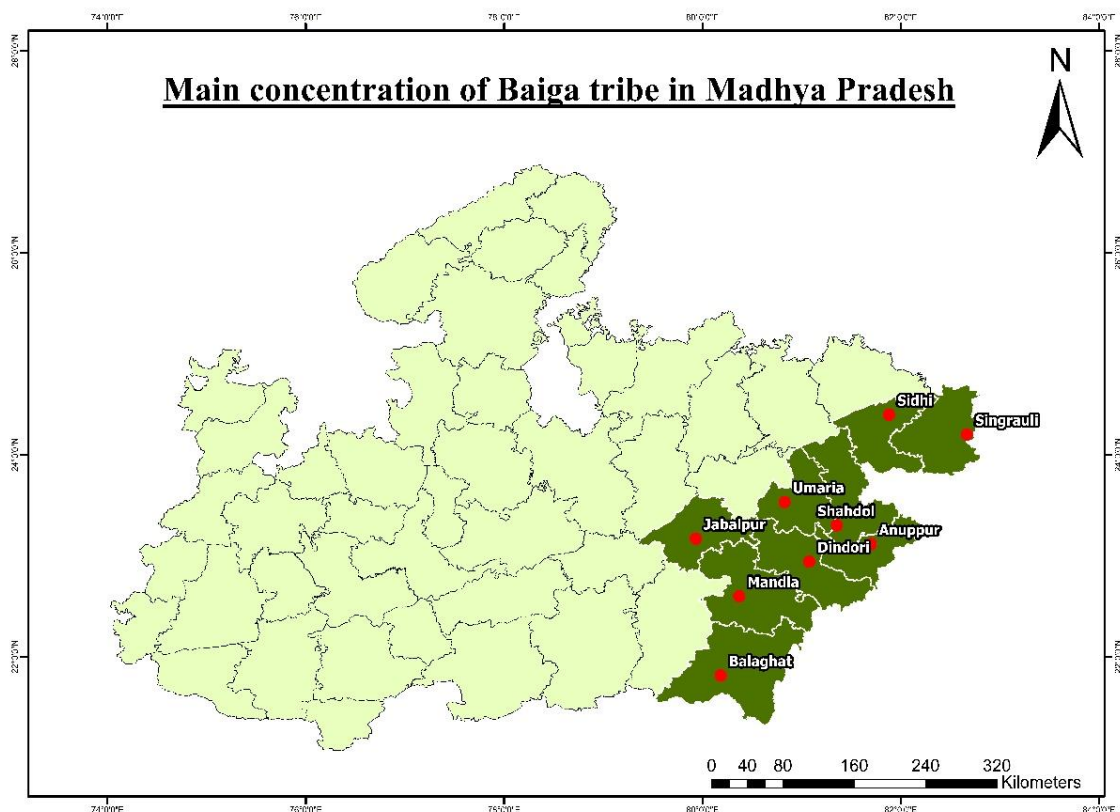
This paper has two objectives.

- To explain the importance of tattoos in tribal cultures across the world.
- To explain the process of tattooing in Baiga tribe, its significance works for its modernization, and the situation of the tattoo industry in India.

Database and Methodology

This research work is descriptive. Various research papers and articles have been studied for this work and data on the Baiga tribe have been obtained from the Census of India and maps are made by using ArcGIS 10.8.

Baiga, a PVTG (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group)

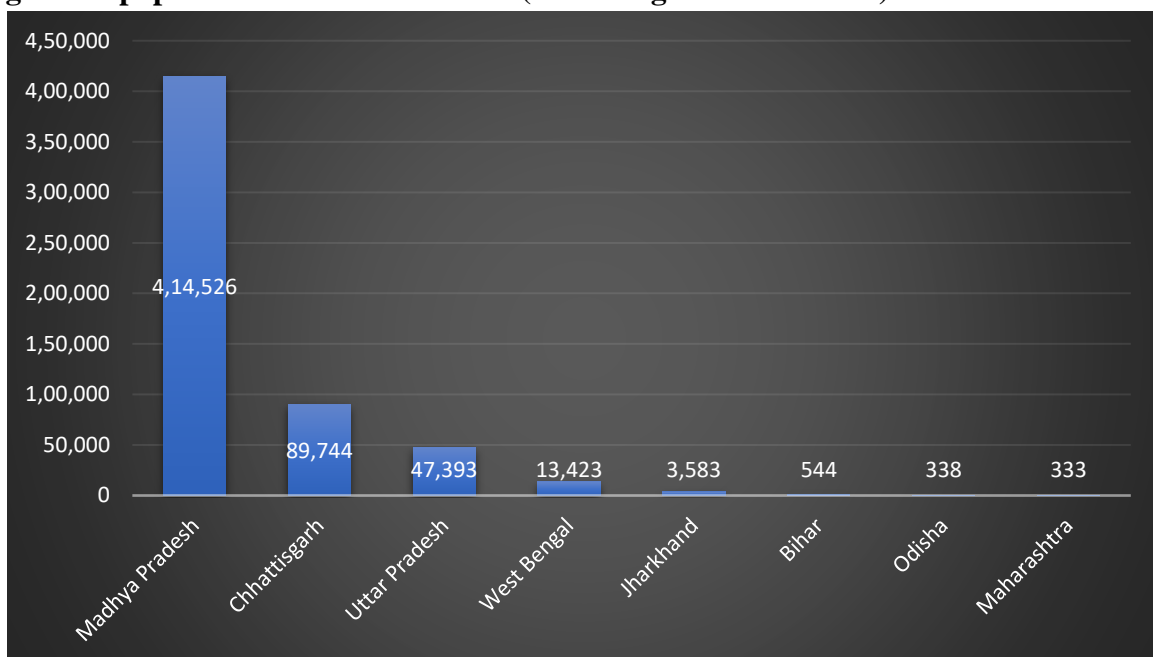


Among the various native communities of Madhya Pradesh, the Baiga tribe continues to demonstrate its anthropological primitiveness. Among the Indian population, the Baigas are among the oldest, most fascinating, and most enjoyable. The Baigas, who inhabit dense forests, have kept outside the purview of plan formulation (Elwin, 2007). The Baiga people are located primarily in Mandla, Dindori, Shahdol, Anuppur, and Balaghat districts in Madhya Pradesh. They have been classified as one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Central India. Among the tribes, PVTGs are particularly at risk. PVTGs require additional funding for their growth since more established and forceful tribal groups receive a larger share of tribal development funds due to this circumstance. Primitive Tribal tribes (PTGs), the least developed tribal tribes, were established as a distinct category by the Dhebar Commission in 1973.

The Indian government rebranded the PTGs as PVTGs in 2006. In this regard, the Indian government Baiga identified the most vulnerable tribal groups in 1975 and designated 52 of them as PVTGs. In 1993, 23 more groups were added to the category, bringing the total number of PVTGs out of the 705 Scheduled Tribes to 75. PVTGs have several fundamental traits, such as being largely homogeneous, having a small population, being physically isolated, not having written language, having relatively simple technology, changing at a slower pace, etc. Odisha has the largest number of PVTGs out of the 75 listed.

Mother Nature is considered sacred to the Baiga people. They never sow since that would be like them scrubbing their mother's breast. They think it's impossible to ask Mother Nature to grow food on the same plot of land once more. yet again. They think Mother Nature would become weak if they did this. Therefore, the Baigas engage in beware agriculture, which involves clearing forests and setting them on fire. They are skilled hunters and brave woodsmen. Adhering to a lifestyle centered around forest food, they take great pride in identifying as the woodland People.

• **Baiga tribe population in different states (according to Census 2011) -**



• **Main concentration of Baiga tribe in Madhya Pradesh**

District	Population (according to 2011 census)
Shahdol	99,299
Umaria	87,177
Singrauli	45,142
Mandla	43,331
Dindori	42,109
Anuppur	30,211
Sidhi	26,392
Balaghat	25,226
Jabalpur	9539

Importance of Tattoos in Tribal culture across the World

Tribal tattoos are very important in many different cultures worldwide. These tattoos are regarded as a rite of passage and a means of establishing a connection with one's ancestors in many indigenous civilizations. Every tribe has unique symbols and styles that stand for its spiritual beliefs, customs, and history. For instance, tribal tattoos, or "moko," are firmly ingrained in the identity of the tribe and are revered in Maori culture in New Zealand. These elaborate facial tattoos are meant to convey the narrative of the wearer's accomplishments, social standing, and ancestry. In a similar vein, tribal tattoos known as "tatau" are revered as symbols of protection, bravery, and strength among Polynesian societies. Tribal tattoos are a common way for Native Americans to acknowledge their ancestry and establish spiritual connections. These tattoos can depict significant cultural symbols, animals, or natural aspects. They are thought to bestow strength, protection, and direction upon the wearer. Tattoos are important in many facets of life in tribal societies. They are used to commemorate significant life events like weddings, coming-of-age rituals, and military victories. These body art pieces function as a visible depiction of an individual's standing, achievements, and affiliation with their community. Certain cultures also employ tattoos as a means of defense. For instance, to ward off evil spirits, women of the Kayan tribe in Southeast Asia have elaborate neck tattoos known as "giraffe necks." These tattoos are thought to protect against disease and bring prosperity. In ceremonies and rituals, tribal tattoos are also employed. For example, young males in many African tribes go through grueling tattooing rites to symbolize their bravery and manhood. These tattoos are thought to provide protection and strength, and they are viewed as a kind of initiation.

The tattoos, called Godna, are a sign of nomadic identity for the Baiga tribe. Symbolic pride bestows upon women a sense of fulfilment. Because of how deeply ingrained these tattoos are in Baiga culture, every Baiga family within the tribe ensures that the next generation inherits tattoos and their importance. These tattoos have become ingrained in the bodies and souls of only women. Every portion of the Baiga's body, from head to foot, is covered in tattoos. The primary creative motivation for these tattoos is the arrangement of specific symbols, which adds a touch of originality. A small percentage of women get tattoos. They use various tattoo designs to adorn various body areas. Several mark kinds include dots or thin lines on the cheek or chin, below the neck, and on the back, as well as long, parallel lines produced on the face, particularly on the forehead. Ladies referred to as Godharins, are members of the Ojha community (Badni tribes of MP) who are skilled tattoo artists. The tribes' tattoo-making customs begin in the winter and last into the summer. These tattoos are meant to be a permanent part of the wearer since

they are meant to become embedded in the soul. Baiga girls get tattoos at a young age, before being married, and then again after getting married. Godnas are an ancient type of body art that is in danger of disappearing.

There is historical proof of godna dating back to 200 BCE. It was thought that no facial scar would be so adorning until female figurines discovered in Bharahut were discovered to have godna in their hands, legs, and faces; Therefore, the sculptures may show tattoos. The godna tradition among the tribal people is inspired by their beliefs and religious rituals of passage. Godna is present in both male and female tribal members; in Baigas, only females have tattoos, while males have different traits. This culture is exclusively found in interior rural areas; nevertheless, due to many modernization forces, traditional godna culture is disappearing from metropolitan areas, The sense of cultural importance is eroding, and tattoos are now solely for body art.

Process of Godna

Before applying mustard oil to the area of the body where the godharin will make godna, kajal made from charring flaxseeds (Ramtila) and vidari (Ipomoea Digitata) oil are mixed to prepare ink. Symbols are then etched out on the skin (Palm, arm) with a bamboo needle. forearm, legs, chin, forehead, foot, temple, neck, and other body parts) by pricking in a traditional manner using a sharp wooden needle or a Babool tree thorn, as was done in the past. These days, sharp steel needles come in bundles of ten for thicker tattoo lines and three for thinner ones. Ink is applied to the mark by godanhari when blood flows out. The babool tree, or Arabica nilotica, has astringent properties, promotes healing, and inhibits the growth of scars. Girls cry as the tattooing process is excruciating. Godanhari then recited mantras calling their ancestor god, Isht Devta, for sparing them from suffering throughout the godna procedure. Godanhari adds turmeric (haldi) powder to the tattooed design and instructs not to massage it. He also recommends sprinkling haldi powder twice a week. Following this process, the sign becomes an integral component of the body. Godanhari is given clothes, jaggery, grains, and a few rupees as a reward.

Purpose and Significance of Tattooing or Godna

The majority of Indians had some kind of tattoo. Depending on geography, gender, and relations, it fulfilled several functions. A wide range of ideas and worries about the human body were represented through tattoos. The ancient tribe is where the tribal fashion originated. similar to the Baigas. In terms of all tribal styles, line separation is crucial. Not only should the area that has been tattooed be well-shaped, but the areas that have been left uncoloured also be well-shaped. The Baiga people resided in the state of Maharashtra. These tattoos bear a striking resemblance to religious tales. The primary subject matter of the tattoos is the Indian religion.

A famous statement in Baigas for the importance of Godna is following

**“If you buy bangles, my daughter, they will break in a few days;
But if you are tattooed, it will last forever”.**

Tribal tattoos were once used as a way to identify oneself with a certain tribe. It was also used to indicate religious and spiritual beliefs. Certain cultures utilized tattoos as a form of self-defence and to blend in

with their surroundings. These tribes identify themselves through tattoos. social standing and even therapeutic intentions.

The Baigas are discrete ethnic groups distinguished by their way of life and customs. They offer an understanding of how human society is developing. They are highly skilled in the fields of medical and crafts creation. These people can preserve their culture and traditions and aid in the nation's growth if they receive the right assistance. Although tattooing has gained popularity worldwide, it still holds some cultural value in the indigenous community. For many tribes of central India, body tattoos are a social sign and an absolute necessity. It has to do with their beliefs, health care practices, and religion, system, physical adornment, social standing, money, etc. The Baiga tribe from central India typically enjoys getting different symbols tattooed on them that are connected to their deity, God, or totem. They all share the belief that these gods and ancestors guard them against many threats, including enemies, untamed animals, evil spirits, and natural disasters. Certain body sections have therapeutic benefits from tattooing, and it's thought that certain areas aid in the recovery from certain common illnesses

• **Some common cultural symbols, their meaning, and local name**

S.no.	Symbol	Meaning	Local name
1	Sun	Try to control nature	Suraj
2	Moon	Belief in nature	Chandrama
3	Dots	Serve from the evil eye	Chatki-Matki
4	Om	Religious belief	Om
5	Scorpion	Fertility and stimulating sexual desire	Bichu
6	Peacock in pair	Beauty and prosperity	Mayur
7	Trident	Symbol of lord Shiva	Trishul
8	Lotus	Symbol of Goddess Laxmi	Kamal
9	Flowerpot	Fertility	Gamla
10	Fish	Prosperity and good fortune	Machli

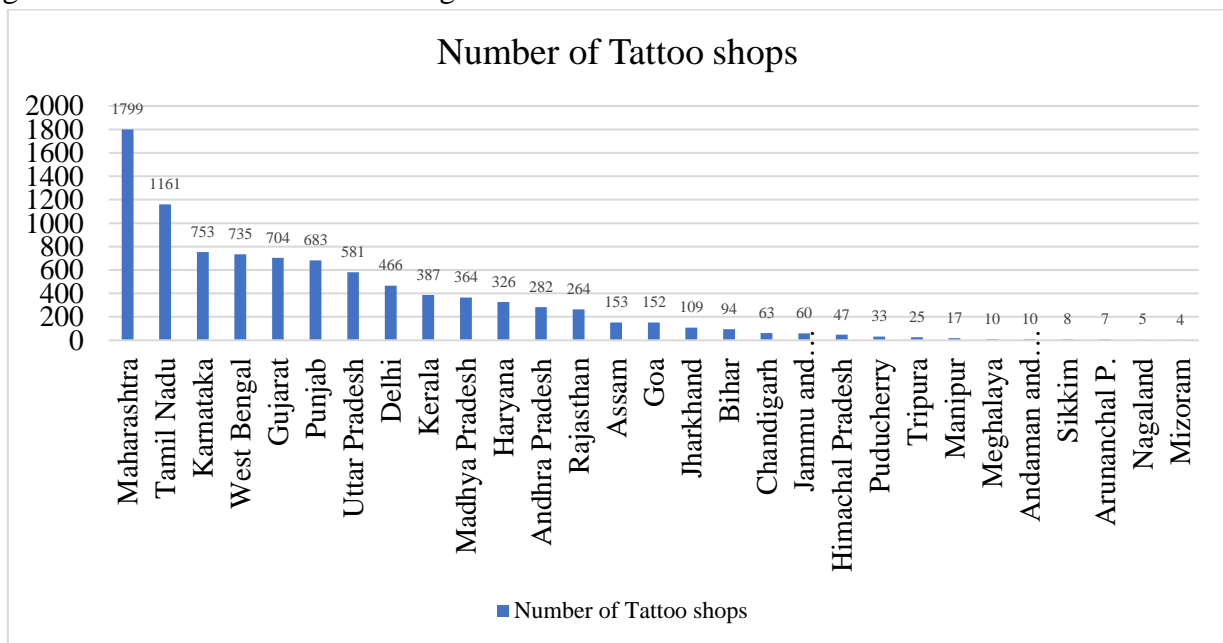
Preventing the deterioration of Baiga tribal tattoos

Although many Baiga tribal girls used to have forehead tattoos to set them apart from other tribes, today very few do. For this reason, the Baiga tattoo artists Mangala Bai Marawi and Amit Arjel Sharma are keen to keep up the custom. The Baiga tribe's female members can be easily distinguished from those of other tribes, such as the Gond and Bhil, by the tattoos on their foreheads. Unexpectedly, traditional Indian tattoo styles and motifs are becoming more and more popular. Rather than merely being a trend, its comeback signifies a profound reconnecting with the rich creative, and cultural past of the Indian subcontinent. Indian traditional tattoos tell intricate tales that are weaved into the fabric of time rather than being merely pictures drawn on the skin. The indigenous tattooing rituals that have long been an essential part of India's rich cultural legacy are being preserved and revived in line with the country's increasing modernization. Indian tribal culture`s tattoo traditions disappearing quickly. To preserve the art form, a few artists from states like Madhya Pradesh and Nagaland have been making the effort to record the procedure, the tools, and the design. As social animals, we have an innate tendency to use our abilities to improve our standing in the greater group to which we belong, whether consciously or subconsciously. Mankind's propensity to create visual markers, such as tattoos, that collectively tell the narrative of the groups those marked bodies

belonged to is sufficiently evidenced across cultures globe. Over time, the culture of visual markers—particularly tattoos—went from being interpreted to being used for aesthetic purposes. It signified a variety of things, including protective charms for luck and love, man-made symbols of birth status, branding of particular social classes and sections of society, and religious and spiritual emblems. Urban adolescents have become more interested in getting tattoos as a result of growing urbanization.

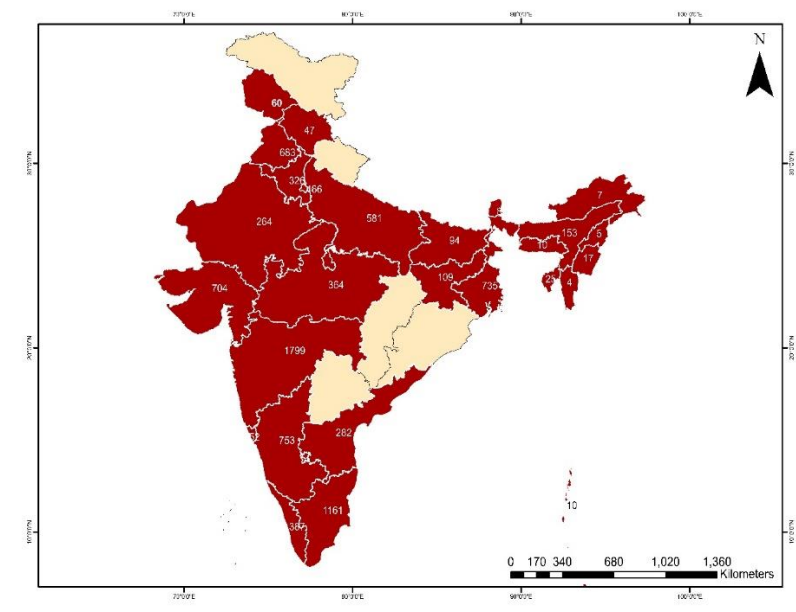
The situation of the Tattoo industry in India

The tattoo industry in India is growing rapidly, with an approximate annual revenue of ₹20,000 crore. However, laws and regulations governing cleanliness and best practices do not exist. The loose regulations put ignorant artists and clients alike at greater risk of infection.



Source: <https://rentechdigital.com/smartscraper/business-report-details/india/tattoo-shops>

- **Tattoo shops or studios distribution in India -**



Source: <https://rentechdigital.com/smartscraper/business-report-details/india/tattoo-shops>

Mangala Bai Maravi and Amit Arjel Sharma (Famous tattoo artist) standing alongside her fifteen-foot-long work displayed at the Chau Chak Wing Museum, University of Sydney .



Source: <https://www.outlooktraveller.com/experiences/heritage/mangala-bai-maravi-takes-indias-fading-godna-art-to-sydney>

Based on the above data, it is clear that the tattoo industry has made its place in many states of India, but still, a lot of improvement is needed in this field and the most crucial thing is to ensure that health is customer taken care of and that this activity is done correctly. The art of tribal society is also getting associated with it and many emerging tattoo artists are learning traditional tattoo methods from the tribal society and are preserving their culture as well as spreading it. There are immense possibilities for development in this field in the future.

Conclusion

Based on the above description, it can be said that tattoos have a lot of importance in tribal society. It has a cultural basis and there is an extreme need to protect it. If this culture is not preserved, it will go extinct. Tattoos have a lot of importance in the Baiga tribe. Here it is called Godna and it has a lot of importance in the Baiga society. The tattoo industry has spread throughout several Indian states, but there is still much room for improvement. Above all, it is crucial to protect the customers' health and carry out this activity safely and responsibly. Tribal society's art is also becoming associated with it; numerous up-and-coming tattoo artists are studying traditional tattoo techniques from the tribe and thereby propagating and conserving their culture. Future developments in this subject have a plethora of opportunities. In present times, this tribal art has been modernized to a great extent and tattoo has been widely accepted in the present modern society in the future there are immense possibilities for the growth of this tattoo industry all over the world.

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