

# Traditional Tattooing Art among Gond Tribe of Dindori District, Madhya Pradesh

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## Abstract

The Tribal culture is full of proverbs, tales and rituals. They are stretched in different states of India. They follow different types of customs that are different from other tribes. The custom which is prevailing in tribes is tattooing custom. The custom of tattooing in tribes was from ancient period and is continuing today in traditional form. Madhya Pradesh has the distinction of having largest tribal population of India. Gond tribe is one of the dominant group of India including Madhya Pradesh. Tattooing is the amazing method of decoration and this is their proudly tradition. Field study was undertaken with the objective to elucidate the traditional knowledge on tattooing art. Data was gathered through personal interviews with observation method from purposive selected samples and photographs were taken to support the study.

**Keywords:** Tattooing, Tribal Culture, Gond Tribe.

## Introduction

India is a nation not only rich in history and tradition but also one composed of so many diverse cultures. The culture of India refers to the way of life of the people of India. Madhya Pradesh represents one such culture that is tribal culture of India. Madhya Pradesh has the distinction of having largest tribal populations of India.

From ancient records it is found that the tattoos were integral part of tribals. Hence tribals and tattoos were inseparable phenomenon. Tribal women were fond of painting their nude body with colours produced from natural herbs. Tradition of tribals indicated that tattoos are the symbol of status, religion, love, emotions, protection and punishment. It is believed by tribals that tattoos protect themselves from evil worlds and non tattooed women will never be admitted in the heaven. Tattooing is the scale by which the beauty of Gond women is measured.

Gonds are in largest number among all the tribes of Madhya Pradesh. The custom which is prevailing in Gond tribe is tattooing custom. Tattooing is the amazing method of decoration and this is their proudly tradition. The women of the Gonds, get their bodice tattooed extensively and elaborately. Gond women get the soles of their left foot tattooed with a motif which represents the earth in a triangular form and soles of the right foot tattooed with the motif of the Padamsen Deo in an oval shape. Tattoo motifs reflect not only the environment of the tribal but also their occupation and tools. For the Gond tribes, tattoo art is a matter of prestige to them. They do it to flaunt their status. It has been seen that folk songs are sung while tattoo is being performed.

## Need and Importance of The Study

Tribal culture is a culture which has its own unique importance. But now tribes are impressed by urban culture and mixing their selves in it, due to this there is some difference observed in their customs. There are some customs which are on the border of extinction. The art of tattooing in the tribes is decreasing gradually. This type of research very essential and important for preserving the existence of amazing art of tattooing and their motifs.

## Objective of the Study

The research work aims at:

1. Providing an illustrative report to serve as a reference document for people to know about tattoo design motifs and its significance. this will serve as research material for designers in textiles and related fields in art and increase their knowledge and creativity.

2. Promoting tribal art and culture at the international level to earn foreign exchange for the country.

### Methodology

To achieve authentic data for the study, a systematic descriptive research design was planned. Personal interviews cum observation method were used to suffice the purpose. Questionnaire was framed for the interview schedule regarding the traditional tattooing. Sampling selection was done by adopting purposive sampling method. Dindori district was selected purposively and four villages were selected from dindori district. The selection of the villages was on the basis of certain factors like concentration of the Tribes, Population, the villages practicing tattooing to a greater extent, accessible by the investigator in terms of mobility and safety. The villages selected were Lalpur, Singarsati, Neemtola, Singpur for gathering data for Gond tribe, A total of six tattoo artists were selected for study.

After finalization of the sample selection and the interview schedule, the information was procured through an extensive field work. All the interviews to the tattoo artists were conducted in colloquial language and responses were recorded in English. Both primary source and secondary source with photographic documentation facilitated documentation of the study, The data was systematically analyzed to get detailed information regarding the tattooing in different ages supported by photographic evidence also.

### Result and Discussion

The present study aimed to document the traditional tattooing of selected Gond tribe of Dindori district, Madhya Pradesh.

#### Traditional Tattooing Among Gond Tribe of Dindori District

The aesthetic sense of Gond is reflected in many ways. Their aesthetic sense is ofcourse not identical with that of ours, for instance tattooing is very important amongst Gond women. The Gond women are probably one of the most tattooed women.

Tattooing has religious and aesthetic values along with therapeutic qualities. It is believed that a non-tattooed women will never be admitted in the heaven. It is also thought that it is the tattooing which goes up to the heaven. The therapeutic aspect of tattooing is that it is thought to be cure of old age more. Tattooing is the scale by which the beauty of women is measured. A heavily tattooed bride is the most beautiful bride.

#### Procedure of Tattooing

The tattooing is done by the women of 'Badna' community. They are called 'Badnin'. Firstly the kajal (Ink) for the tattoo is prepared. Firstly Ramtila oil and Saraigum mixed and roasted in a vessel. This is hand pressed and made into horizontal rolls. These rolls are then burnt to obtain the ink. Sometime Beja wood colour is also added to the kajal (Ink), to give it a rich colour. In some parts fluid obtained from the Malwan tree is used as ink.

**Plate 1: Tattooing Materials**



The part of the body which is to be cleaned and the predetermined design is drawn upon it. Then, needles bunch are taken and dipped in the ink, and the skin is pierced with it. This piercing is done all over the design. This is quite painful and draws blood also. After the entire design is covered with the needle pricks the site is washed with cow dung water or soap-nut water. The soap-nut water provides a cooling effect and decreases the pain

**Plate 2**

**Tattoo design Motifs of Gond women (Hand & Lag Tattoos)**



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

Plate 3: Tattoo artists Researcher with Tattoo artists



### Conclusion

The study regarding the Gond tribe revealed that tattooing is very important part of the women life. All the women started tattooing at their very young age. The tribal tattoo is by far the most popular of all the tattoos in the world. Tattooing is very widely practiced thing among the tribals of Madhya Pradesh. The tribal tattoos was used for many symbols and designs which showed their status within their tribal community. GOND women preferred crosses, stars and crude figure of men and animals for tattooing. A Good girl was first tattooed when she was only a few years old. The Gonds believed that tattooing has religious and aesthetic value along with therapeutic qualities.

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