

FESTIVALS, TRADITIONS AND RITUALS ASSOCIATED WITH SACRED GROVES OF CHHATTISGARH

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ABSTRACT: Tribals or communities associated with this grove have deep faith on their deity. Any important work is started after their worship; the betel leaf, nuts of *Areca catechu*, Joss stick and hadiya liquor (made up of rice), etc are dedicated to the deity at the time of worship. The work of worship is done by Baiga (local priest) any kind of religious works are also done by the priest. They conduct many socio-religious ceremonies, prayers, sacrament in the festivals. They follow many rituals like singing in a group like tribes of Jashpur region celebrate together Sarhul festival, by singing and dancing in a group on the maturity of the crop. Bheema dev is deity, when there is no rain in the village or not much rain in the village during whole year, and then villagers use to pray to this deity. After the prayers and rituals, villagers use to sing and dance in a group. Every year, at the month of Magh of the Hindi calendar i.e. on the January-February two-fair is conducted by the villagers which is famous by the name as Punni mela and Madai mela. Bastar Dushhera begins with the ritual known as the 'Kachangadi' in which a virgin girl is swing in the bed made up of thorn. They also use to make many food items or dish in these festivals like Bada, Chila, Tikhurpak, Madia page and many drink items also like Hadiya, Landa etc.

Keywords: *Sacred groves, biodiversity conservation, presiding deity, rituals, festivals, etc.*

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