



**AS TOLD BY THE
BASTAR MYANA**

**THE ORIGINS
VOL 01**



IN THIS VOLUME

This volume opens a portal to the enigmatic past. It stands as a testament to the rich tapestry of human existence, where each story and custom is a thread in the fabric of our shared heritage. As you turn these pages, may you uncover the hidden wisdom and ancient traditions that have shaped our world since time immemorial. Uncover the ancient tribes silent tribute and the enigmatic Bastar Myana, a bird that echoes with human voices, bridging realms. Welcome to a realm of wonder and discovery, where the origins of humanity and the mysteries of the beyond intertwine in a symphony of intrigue and enchantment.

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THE BASTAR MYANA

In the ancient lands of Bastar, the "Bastar Mayna" emerges as a mystical and captivating bird, graced with a remarkable gift - The ability to mimic human voices.

Amongst the legends and folklore of the region, whispers speak of divine blessings bestowed upon this creature by ancient spirits or gods, gifting it the rare power to communicate with humans like no other winged being.

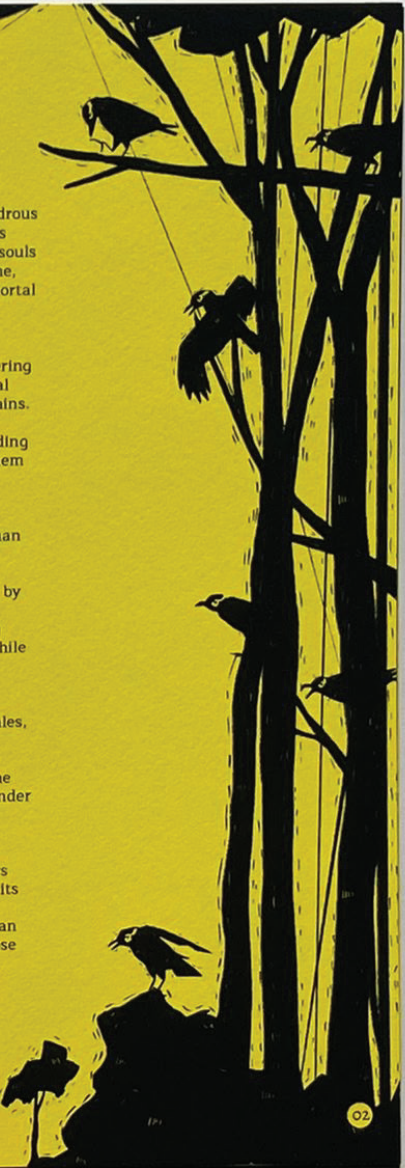
In the mystical tales passed down through generations, the Bastar Mayna's mimicry transcends the mere imitation of sounds; it becomes a mystical form of communion with the spiritual realm.


Believers hold that when this wondrous bird echoes human voices, it carries profound messages from departed souls or channels the desires of the divine, bridging the chasm between the mortal world and the ethereal plane.

Revered as a sacred guardian, its presence is hailed as an omen, offering blessings or forewarning of mystical events from the otherworldly domains. The people interpret its melodic mimicry as a cryptic language, guiding them on life's path and granting them glimpses of what lies ahead.

The enchanting symphony of the Bastar Mayna extends beyond human voices; it echoes the harmonies of nature itself, a testament to the ancient magic woven into its being by mystical forces of the land. Some whisper that its song holds healing powers, soothing troubled souls, while others believe it invokes awe and wonder in all who listen.

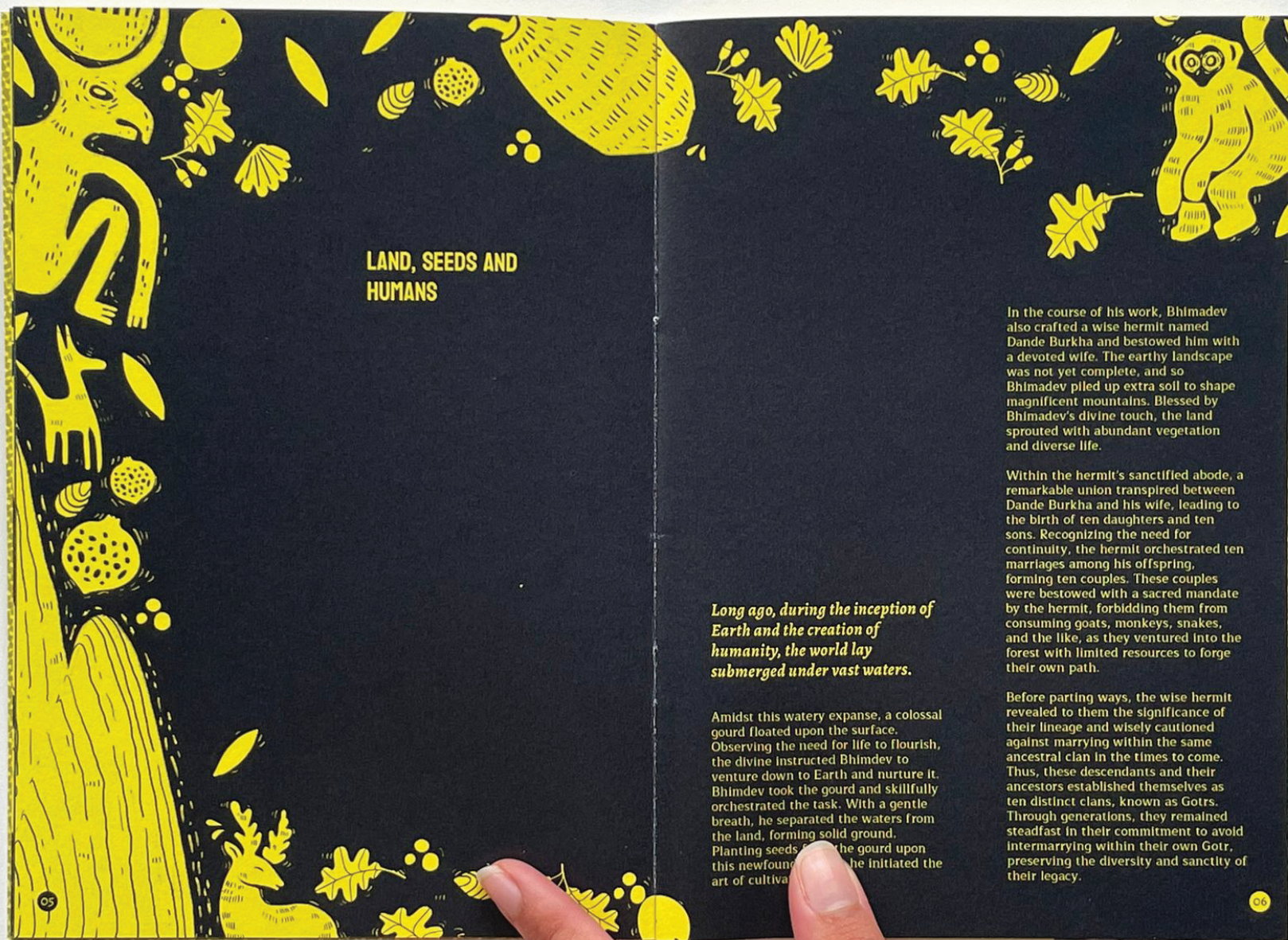
In the tapestry of these mystical tales, the Bastar Mayna emerges as a captivating symbol, a bridge connecting the tangible world to the realms of the supernatural. A reminder that existence is far more intricate than meets the eye, and nature, resplendent with its beauty and enigma, harbors secrets and powers beyond human comprehension. As its wings flutter through the winds of mystery, the Bastar Mayna leaves an indelible mark on the hearts of those who seek to unravel the ancient enigmas of life and existence.





In the heartland of Maadiya tribe, an enigmatic tradition thrives—the Maadiya Khaam, a tribute to those who journey beyond. When a village luminary departs, their kin erect a pillar, a silent sentinel of memory. Cremation or burial is the rite, orchestrated by the departed's nephew, who adorns the place with a pitcher suspended on bamboo, where droplets fall, soothing the soul.

The memorial, a clay-crowned pillar, stands adorned with stone tombstones, etching life's saga—plowing fields, venturing to the jungle, playing the mandar, dancing, sharing mahua's nectar. Creatures and kin on the pillar, symbolize rebirth. At the top of the pillar a bird alight—signifying a soul's flight. Elders share wisdom, how souls soar like birds, a cycle etched in stone.



LAND, SEEDS AND HUMANS

Long ago, during the inception of Earth and the creation of humanity, the world lay submerged under vast waters.

Amidst this watery expanse, a colossal gourd floated upon the surface. Observing the need for life to flourish, the divine instructed Bhimdev to venture down to Earth and nurture it. Bhimdev took the gourd and skillfully orchestrated the task. With a gentle breath, he separated the waters from the land, forming solid ground. Planting seeds from the gourd upon this newfound land, he initiated the art of cultivation.

In the course of his work, Bhimadev also crafted a wise hermit named Dande Burkha and bestowed him with a devoted wife. The earthy landscape was not yet complete, and so Bhimadev piled up extra soil to shape magnificent mountains. Blessed by Bhimadev's divine touch, the land sprouted with abundant vegetation and diverse life.

Within the hermit's sanctified abode, a remarkable union transpired between Dande Burkha and his wife, leading to the birth of ten daughters and ten sons. Recognizing the need for continuity, the hermit orchestrated ten marriages among his offspring, forming ten couples. These couples were bestowed with a sacred mandate by the hermit, forbidding them from consuming goats, monkeys, snakes, and the like, as they ventured into the forest with limited resources to forge their own path.

Before parting ways, the wise hermit revealed to them the significance of their lineage and wisely cautioned against marrying within the same ancestral clan in the times to come. Thus, these descendants and their ancestors established themselves as ten distinct clans, known as Gotrs. Through generations, they remained steadfast in their commitment to avoid intermarrying within their own Gotr, preserving the diversity and sanctity of their legacy.



**THE ANCIENT RITES OF PASSAGE
UNVEILING THE MYSTERY OF TRIBAL BIRTH CUSTOMS**

In the heart of human communities, an age-old rhythm weaves the tapestry of existence, guiding individuals through the enigmatic journey of life. These communities, especially the tribal ones, possess intricate customs that paint vivid strokes on the canvas of life's pivotal moments. These customs, known as the Rites of Passage, are the keys that unlock the doorways between the mundane and the sacred, the individual and the collective. As we venture into the labyrinth of Central-Eastern Indian tribes, we discover the cryptic charm of their birth-related customs.



WELCOMING THE STRANGER: THE NAMING RITUAL

A newborn, a bundle of untold potential, steps into the world as a stranger to the tribe's intricate web of connections. It is only through the age-old naming ritual that this tiny soul finds its place among the living. Picture this: an elder, a guardian of ancient wisdom, seats himself with a leaf cup cradling water. Beside it lies another cup holding grains of paddy. The elder plucks a single grain, a grain that holds within it the essence of a name. Like an oracle invoking cosmic forces, he removes the husk, releasing the grain onto the water's calm surface. This act, a mystic dance of naming, is an offering to the Divine. And so, the sequence repeats, each grain mirroring the whispers of God, elders, ancestors, and the child.

With every grain released, the invisible threads of destiny entwine. When the fourth grain meets the third in a gentle embrace upon the water's embrace, the cosmic symphony crescendos. It is at this juncture that the infant receives a

name, a name intertwined with the ancestors' legacy. From this sacred dance emerges the child, forever bound to the clan, tribe, and the lineage of those who came before.

THE GUARDIANS OF MYSTERY: GOD, ELDERS, ANCESTORS

Through this ritual, the tribe's wisdom etches itself upon the newborn's destiny. The child is not merely a flesh and blood creation but a celestial gift, a being chosen by the Divine. Elders' whispers echo through the grains, a promise of guidance throughout life's labyrinthine passages. As the ancestors' names are invoked, the child's destiny intertwines with the lineage's wisdom, a torchbearer of their collective memory.


THE SILENT WITNESS: EARTHLY LIFE AND ANCESTRAL COMMUNITY

This ritual is a testimony to life's enigma, a revelation that the child's origin is a divine mystery, witnessed by the elders who straddle the threshold between realms. It encapsulates the tribal belief that

earthly life is but a fleeting passage, a journey leading to the eternal embrace of the ancestral community. The tribal soul aspires to find solace within this timeless community, where the tribe thrives forever.

In the heart of these cryptic customs lies the essence of life's profound mystery. Through the naming ritual, a tribe breathes life into the newborn, weaving the threads of fate into a cosmic tapestry. The child, now named, embarks on a journey that bridges the mundane and the spiritual, the seen and the unseen. The ancient echoes of Central-Eastern Indian tribes whisper through the grains, inviting us to unravel the riddles of existence and embrace the sacred dance of birth.





In a distant village, two brothers, one rich and the other poor, resided. The impoverished brother, seeking food, was denied by his elder sibling. Along his path, he met an elderly woman carrying a bundle of logs on her head.

The compassionate woman asked, "My child, why the distress?" The poor brother shared his sorrow, and she offered help. "Accompany me with this bundle, and you shall receive a gift," she said. Grateful, he agreed, and she bestowed upon him a stone mill grinder with mystical properties. "With a pure heart and three turns to the right, it shall grant your desires, but remember, turn it thrice to the left to cease," she advised.

Back home, his wife's spirits lifted, which had turned cold when she saw him carrying a stone mill instead of food. As he demonstrated the grinder's magic, rice started pouring out of the grinder and fulfilling their wishes. With newfound abundance, they lived lavishly, hosting feasts and gaining admiration.

The elder brother, intrigued, stole the grinder and set sail. He had packed food for this sail, but had forgotten salt. He then remembered that the wish granting mill had the power to grant all the wishes small or big. So he turned the handle thrice and asked for salt.

But the one thing the brother had not paid attention to was how to stop the mill. Ultimately with the salt vigorously pouring out of the mill grinder his boat became overloaded and sank in the sea, forever rendering the waters saline.

People believe the stone mill grinder still grinds salt, forever lost at sea.

THE TALE OF SALTY SEAS





Amidst the Bhil tribe's mystic realm, a captivating custom unfolds—a tale whispered through generations. A potter's skill weaves a humble terracotta abode, a Dhaba/Ghumat, where departed spirits find solace. Vermillion marks the earthly canvas, and the Head beckons souls. "Reside here till heaven welcomes you," the plea resonates.

An earthen lamp kindles the path, water cradled in a vessel, and tobacco, a fondness of the departed, offered. In Bhil villages, Dhabas grace the landscape, a window to ancestral souls, watched from realms beyond. Amid tribal lore, myriad worlds unfurl—ancestral cosmos, a floating planet, a celestial voyage to the living space of Earth's forebears.



THE ASCENDING SKIES

Long ago, during the Earth's early days, humans were of small stature, and the sky hung much lower.

Countless creatures roamed the Earth, and the sky seemed easily within their reach. People could even draw water from the clouds, and the celestial canopy resembled the rooftops of homes, with the moon and stars seemingly just a hand's reach away.

Yet, the low sky also brought challenges to their daily lives. The scorching sun, so near, caused immense discomfort.

A diligent woman who cleaned the village found herself constantly brushing against the sky while working, squatting down in frustration due to its proximity.

One day, infuriated, she struck the sky with her broom and uttered a curse, "Go, wicked sky! Why won't you ascend higher?" Annoyed by her words and the broom's impact, the sky surged with fury, ascending to a height beyond human reach.

Once, people could easily touch the celestial roof, but now, it eluded their grasp. The sky's elevation was said to have led to an increase in human height, as they strove to reach for the newly elevated expanse.

As time passed, the sky continued to rise, and human height naturally increased, allowing them to attain their average stature with ease.



THE ANCIENT RITES OF PASSAGE
A GLIMPSE INTO TRIBAL DEATH CUSTOMS

In the heart of Central-Eastern India, communities uphold age-old traditions that guide individuals through life's transitions. These rites of passage, marking birth, marriage, and death, provide a window into the intricate relationship between the living and the departed. In this journey we uncover the customs that shape the final chapter of life among the major tribes of this region.



PASSING BEFORE THE HARVEST: THE RITUAL OF FIRE AND REMEMBRANCE

In the embrace of the Central Eastern landscape, a person's departure aligns with the rhythm of the crops. Should the breath of life cease before the seeds sprout, a ritual of fire awaits. The deceased's body is consumed by flames, leaving behind a handful of charred bones. These charred remnants find a temporary haven within an earthen jar, nestled in the kitchen garden or a nearby hut. Here, the essence of the departed lingers amidst the plants and the breeze, a testament to the cycle of life and nature's embrace. Yet, when death arrives amidst the standing crops, a different path unfolds. The body is laid to rest in the village's burial ground. As the seasons shift, a select few bones are retrieved and gently placed in an earthen vessel, safeguarded beneath a stone near the home.

As the year draws to a close, these bones are gathered, echoing the harvest of the land. A procession winds through the village, carrying these fragments of life's tapestry. Songs, dances, and tears intertwine, evoking a symphony that resonates with the realms beyond.



SHADES OF THE DEPARTED: A DANCE BETWEEN REALMS

The belief in the survival of the soul weaves a delicate thread between the worlds. Among the tribals, the soul takes on two shades – the light and the heavy. The journey beyond begins, yet the essence of the departed remains tethered to the home. Following the burial ceremony, a special rite summons the light shade back to its earthly abode. An intimate corner of the house becomes a sanctuary, a place where the departed finds solace among familiar faces and cherished memories.

Time passes, and the heavy shade roams, untethered and restless. Food and drink are offered, a bridge between the realms. After a period of anticipation, a poignant ceremony unites the heavy shade with its ancestral kin. Prayers to gods and ancestors reverberate, paving the way for a peaceful coexistence.

The heavy shade finds its rightful place among the ancestral realm, a reunion that bridges the gap between the living and the departed. A community meal celebrates this union, and the journey of mourning transforms into a celebratory life.

CROWNING THE TRANSITION: BONE DROWNING

As the year takes its final breaths, a crowning ceremony emerges – the bone drowning. Bones, fragments of lives once lived, are carefully gathered from their resting places. The village unites in a procession, a mosaic of song, dance, and drumming, as the bones are carried to their final abode. The Kurukh tribe christens this ritual the 'great marriage.' In a convergence of past and present, the bones find their eternal resting place, and the departed's soul becomes one with the ancestral tapestry.

As we delve into the heart of Central-Eastern Indian tribes, we uncover a sacred symphony that transcends time and space. Through these customs, the tribes navigate the passage from the mortal coil to the realm of ancestors, weaving the threads of existence into a seamless continuum. In the rituals of death, we witness a dance between life and the beyond, a profound celebration of the human spirit's enduring journey.



A collection of illustrative
indigenous folklores from central India by
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