

RESEARCH

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***Bajra* growing community in Rajasthan**

"Life is conceived as one and all its forms are interrelated in a complex system akin to an electromagnetic field but are all parts of an inseparable whole: the vegetative animal and human all emerge from the principle of seed (*bija*) and womb (*garbha*) both energised with breath (*prana*). The conception of *bija* guides as movement and growth in the Indian arts. The *bija* symbolises the dynamic energising principle and the entire universe is its manifestation and expansion", said Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan.

Toeing the theme of *bija* the Janapada Sampada of IGNCA, under its Loka-Parampara programme, is addressing to *bajra* (a variety of millet) to conceptualise the element of *bija* in holistic perspective. Initial ponderings suggests that careful selection of a particular *bija* and its conceptual analysis leads towards an understanding of the entire universe it represents. Consequently, this may provide a clue as to how this totality synthesises with the larger fabric of human culture. One such *bija* is *bajra*.

The selection of *bajra* is one such attempt to study the lifestyle of the communities of western Rajasthan habitated in the village in their myriad facets, significantly highlighting their system of knowledge.

The primal elements which constitute man's physical environment have been conceived in traditional cosmology as the *pancamahabhuta*. The five elements are *prthvi* (earth/land), *akas* (sky), *vayu* (air), *apa* (water) and *agni* (fire). These fundamental units of matter enter into the composition of the universe including man. An elaborate explanation can be found from people's traditional knowledge system within a given socio-cultural context. The lifestyle of people who live in arid zone gives evidence of the importance of *panca mahabhuta* and its inter play in their lives.

Eating food is important but the phenomenon of *vrata* and *upvas* emerges from avoiding it. These are based on time cycle as weekly, fortnightly, monthly, half yearly and yearly. Then there are *parva* (festivals) and *karma* (rituals) associated with them. Understanding of this clarify people's concepts and calculation of the year i.e. the annual calendar. The rituals and festivals are held in a circumscribed space and time leading to the experience of cosmic space and time. Music, dance drama are concomitant with *parva*. Their awareness signifies the role they play in people's life.

Through *bajra* one can understand how education in various types of skills are transmitted from generation to generation. It also offers an avenue to think how centrifugal forces operating new ideas in all matter interpenetrate and coalesce with the traditional ones, reflecting their attitude toward the notion of development.

Taking *bajra* as an entry point one can understand the entire gamut of artistic manifestations attached with the community it represents. *Bajra* becomes a *bindu* and a *bija* too, the subtlest element to start from where the entire concept of life and lifestyle of the people of western Rajasthan emerge in its holistic perspective.

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