



# Changing Socio-Economic Status of Birhor Tribe in Chhattisgarh State, India

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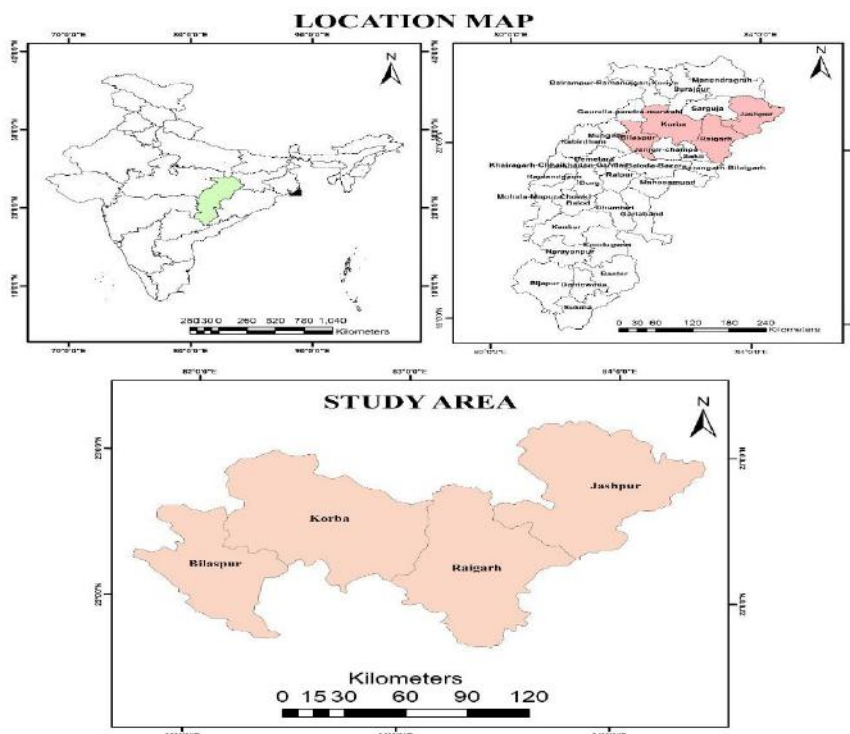
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**Abstract:** This paper is an attempt to analyze the changing socio-economic status of the Birhor tribe. Birhor tribe is a special backward tribe of Chhattisgarh state. They live in Korba, Raigarh, Jashpur, and Bilaspur districts in Chhattisgarh. This population had been decreased in the decade from 1971 to 1981. So, the Chhattisgarh Government declared this tribe as a protected tribe, and their family planning was banned as well input of various government schemes for this tribe can bring a new avenue for this tribe. To get a significant result of the Birhor tribe for Chhattisgarh state.

**Key Words:** Socio-cultural activities, Economic activities, Changing socio-economic assessment.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Birhor or Birhul is a special backward tribe of Chhattisgarh state. Based on residence, this tribe has been divided into two sub-classes, first is Uthlu Birhor, who keep changing their place of residence, and second is Jadhis Birhor, who live in permanent residence in settlements. In Chhattisgarh, the people of this tribe mainly live in Korba, Raigarh, Jashpur, and Bilaspur districts. Their population had decreased or collapsed in the decade from 1971 to 1981. That is why the Chhattisgarh Government had declared this tribe as a protected tribe and their family planning was banned.



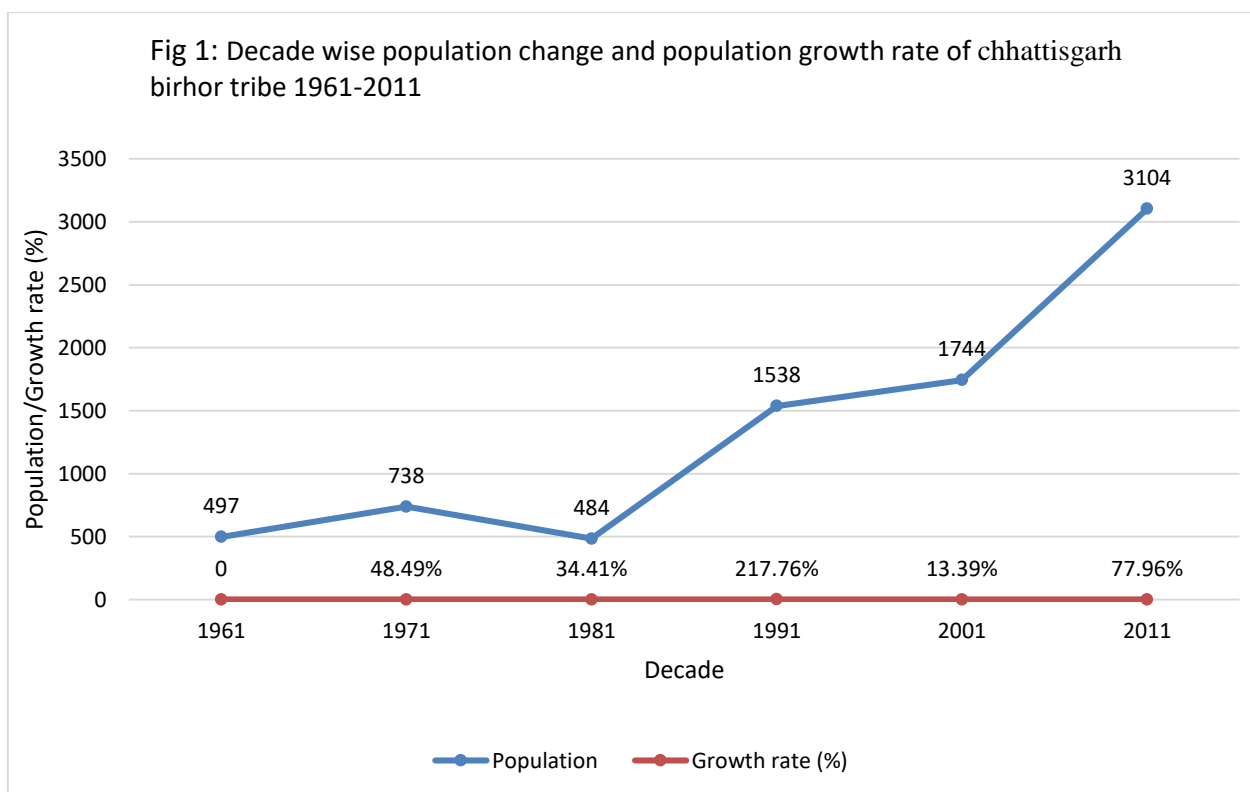


The total population of this tribe in the state in 1961 was 497, which increased almost 6 times to 3104 in the 2011 census after five decades later (Table 1). Their average literacy rate in this decade was about 30 percent, which is many times less than the state and tribal literacy average. The average ratio of women per thousand men in this tribal group was 1034. Special development of this special backward tribe is being done through the Pahari Korwa Development Authority, Jashpur Nagar.

**Table 1:** Population growth rate of Chhattisgarh Birhor tribe 1961-2011

Sl. No.	Decade	Population	Growth Rate
1	1961	497	-
2	1971	738	48.49
3	1981	484	34.41
4	1991	1538	217.76
5	2001	1744	13.39
6	2011	3104	77.96

Source: Chhattisgarh Census Handbook, 2011



## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

The word tribe means socially cohesive unit, associated with a territory, the members of which regard them as politically autonomous (Duncan, 1972). Risley (1902) calls the Birhor Dravidians, whereas Rougree (1921) put them under Australoid group. Roy (1925) physically, the Birhors are melanomas, dolichocephalic, cymotrichous, and platyrrhine race, living in dense forests. Sukla Sashikant (1990), "Bilaspur Jila Me Adibasi Ka Paris than, Arthavastha Aur Samaj" this book studies the impact of economic development on the socio-economic conditions of tribes delineating not only the influence of economic planning on their lifestyle but also dealing with an important measure for improvement in their socio-economic conditions. Jitendra Kumar Premi (2014), says in his journal the "primitive subsistence economy" of the Birhors has been based on nomadic gathering and hunting, particularly for monkeys. S. Tripathy (2017), writes her journal 'Birhor and Their Culture: An Ethnographic Account of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group of



Chhattisgarh' that the ecological setting forms the basis of Birhor's life. They live in unauthorized land in jungles which always have fears of displacement.

### **3. OBJECTIVES:**

The present study has been undertaken with specific objectives –

- i) To identify the different socio-economic and cultural activities.
- ii) To examine the various socio-economic and cultural changes.
- iii) To assess the influence of this tribe.

### **4. METHODOLOGY:**

The data was collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through household surveys, interviews, and discussions with the residents of different villages and secondary data was collected from the following government offices – census handbook and Block Development Office office. The result was derived from statistical methods and techniques and map making by G.I.S. & R.S. software.

### **5. DISCUSSION AND RESULT:**

#### **SETTLEMENT:**

Birhor is a tribe of the Kolarian group. In the state, the Uthlu, or nomadic group of this tribe lives in huts of 8-10 persons in dense forests where there is generally no facility for drinking water, public health, electricity, roads, etc. People of this group shift their residence to other places (Kurha or Kuria) and live there.

The Jaghis group of this tribe lives in settlements called Para or Tola. Taking advantage of the government housing scheme, these people have now started living in permanent houses and have started doing permanent agriculture, but they still do the traditional business of rope making.

#### **BUSINESS:**

The traditional occupations are rope making, hunting forest product collection, and manufacturing of equipment for agriculture and household work.

Unlike other tribes of the state, Birhor people hunt monkeys and eat as well as sell them. That is why it is said about him that monkeys never climb any tree that Birhor touches. These people hunt monkeys and other animals with nets and sticks.

The main occupation of this tribe is to earn income by making rope and making necessary equipment for household work like Bahinga Bet, Pestle, Pestle, Plow, Dholak, etc., and selling them in the village or market. Hence a group of them reside in the forest to get raw material. In this way, these tribes do construction work to fulfill the needs of the society.

The permanent residents of Birhor people work as permanent agricultural laborers and make plastic ropes. Apart from this, they rear chickens and goats for meat supply and income.

#### **FOOD AND BEVERAGES:**

Birhor people are both non-vegetarian and vegetarian. They love monkey meat. These people hunt it with a special type of net. Apart from this, these people eat wild roots, fruits, flowers, and leaves.

These people drink Hadiya and Mahua liquor as beverages. These people often eat meat and bones in every ritual. Although the government ration material is provided every month at a minimum rate. However, most of their people remain malnourished due to a lack of adequate and balanced food.

#### **SOCIAL SYSTEM:**

Endogamy marriage is prohibited in this tribe. These people do four types of marriages. First Tuku, in which the bride and groom are selected after the consent of both parties, the bride price is given and mascara is given to the girl's mother.



The second Udhariya marriage is in which the boy and girl choose each other for their love affair. The third golad marriage in which the boy and girl are exchanged is called Guravat marriage and the fourth is widow marriage. In this tribe, Sama-Fufu marriage means that brothers can marry their sister's son or daughter.

Birhor people perform the last rites of the deceased in ten days. Buries the dead body. Earlier, after the death of a family member, these people used to demolish the old hut and build a new one. Nowadays people are abandoning this tradition.

In these, women are kept in separate huts during menstruation and delivery. There is a tradition of their family is patriarchal. There is a bread-daughter relationship in both the Uthlu and Jadhis groups.

The tradition of giving birth to children is somewhat different among Birhors. A pregnant Birhor woman gives birth to a child in the lap of nature under a tree in the forest.

#### **CLOTHING JEWELLERY:**

These people often live in poverty. That is why they lack clothes according to the season. In winter, these people spend the night lighting a fire and during summer they live under trees.

Tattooing is not mandatory in this tribe. These people wear cheap metal jewelry due to poverty.

#### **FESTIVALS:**

Birhor people of the state celebrate Karkari, Hareli, Nawakhani, Karma Sariya, Diwali, Gomaha celebrate festivals like Holi etc.

#### **GODS AND GODDESSES:**

Birhor people believe in exorcism and witchcraft. In case of any untoward incident or disease, first of all, they treat it at their level. But nowadays people are becoming aware and also doing allopathy treatment. These main deities are Surya Mari Masan, Buddhi Mai, Pahad, Vriksha, Baba Dooralu Dev, etc. Due to awareness, now these people worship gods like Ganesh, Bajrangbali Sharikarji, etc. Baba Dooralu is their god of hunting to whom cock and parial are presented every year.

#### **6. CONCLUSION:**

Due to the continuous efforts of the Chhattisgarh Government and administration, Birhor people have now started living in permanent houses, but they have still not given up their traditional occupation of rope making, making wooden tools and musical instruments, although nowadays these people make plastic ropes instead of machine.

Some Uthlu Birhors have still not given up their nomadic life. A decade ago, these people used to live only in the Raigarh district. Now they have started migrating to Korba and Bilaspur districts due to their nomadic lifestyle. Housing, health, transportation, drinking water education, and other government schemes are not able to take proper advantage of it. That is why these people are backward and most of them remain malnourished.

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