

The tribes constitute 57 per cent of the total population of the district of Mayurbhanj. Though the population of Mayurbhanj is only 6 percent of the state's total population, the tribal population share a 15.42 per cent of the state's total ST Population. The tribals are popularly known as "Adivasi". The major tribes in the district are the Santals, the Kolhas, the Bhumijas, the Bathudis, the Bhuyans, the Gonds (rare now), the Sauntis, the Kharias and the Savaras. They live scattered throughout the district. Their concentration is more in Saraskana, Khunta,

settled cultivation bearing a segment of the tribals who draw their substance from hunting, collecting minor forest produce and others being landless are engaged as labourers in mines and small industries etc.

The significant features of tribals in Mayurbhanj are that they practice the usual customs of the caste Hindus. The only difference being that the bride price is given to the bride by the groom. Hence, the females assume greater importance in tribal society. Both men and women engage themselves in agriculture and other means

A Profile of the Tribes of Mayurbhanj

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Bangiriposi, Bijatala, Jamada, Tiring and Thakurmunda Blocks. The tribal population in those blocks varies from 70 per cent to 80 per cent of the total population of respective Blocks. There are different tribal groups found in the district and they differ in their skills, aptitudes, habits, culture and customs. So the socio-economic panorama of the tribals of the district is extremely complex.

Though they are socially, economically and educationally backward they have their own distinctiveness. They are almost dependent on

of production. The Santal and Bhumija have taken the most advantage of government schemes meant for tribals and they have adequate representation in the state level executive and legislative bodies as well as in the local bodies.

The social, cultural and religious life of Mayurbhanj has been considerably shaped and influenced by tribal tradition. The tribal societies are valuable parts of our heritage. They are economically poor and educationally backward. In spite of such hostile existential thrust. The tribal zealously guard and protect their

culture, tradition custom and heritage. There is a declining trend of tribal population from 1981-1991. There is a little increase in the percentage of tribal population.

The tribals of Mayurbhanj have never lived in isolation from the surrounding society. Tribal communities lost the feudal percentage exposed to non tribal infringement on their customary right to land and forest. However 8 number of national and state level legislations have been enacted to project the traditional entitlement of tribals and also to protect them from exploitation by the non-tribals.

MAJOR TRIBES OF THE DISTRICT

Mayurbhanj is a tribal dominated district. Out of tribal categories in Odisha, Mayurbhanj alone houses 45 categories. They are widely different from one another in terms of their numbers. According to 2001 census the total tribal population of the district stand at 1258459 which come to 56.6 percent of the district's total population. The district rank first in terms of density of tribal population of this state. The major tribes found in Mayurbhanj with distinctive features are as follows :

Santal

According to 2001 census, the total Santal population constitute the 3rd largest tribal community of Odisha. Their main concentration in Odisha is the district of Mayurbhanj where the total tribal population is 565268 and out of which Santal males are 284661 and females 280607 as

per 2001 census. They are also equally found in the neighbouring states like Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

The physical characteristics of the Santal are their skin colour which varies from dark to dark-brown, coarse black hair occasionally curly. They speak a language known as Santali which comes under the Austro-Asiatic group. Pt. Raghunath Murmu, a Santal pioneer had developed the Santali Script known as "Ol Chiki" for the promotion of Santali language and culture. Books are being published in Ol Chiki script for promoting Santal culture and language.

The socio-economic profile of the Santal is found to be remarkably developed in comparison to the other tribes of Mayurbhanj. In the field of tribal literacy they have occupied the foremost position. The ordinary occupation of these tribes is cultivation and they work as agriculture labourers.

Kolha

The Kolha tribes belong to Austric family and are the prime tribes and they do have their own mother tongue. The total population is 218886, out of which 1641 live in urban areas and 217245 in rural areas comprising the second largest tribe of the district as per 2001 census. This type of people are found in the south-west corner of the district. The Kolha tribe has given its name to the territory where it has made its home and to the Kolorian family of tribes and languages. They have a strong fighting spirit and had

organized rebellions number of times. The community is divided into many septs and sub-septs which are exogamous. They worship Kali, Khichingeswari, etc. though their own Gods are Mareng Bunga Hambokes and Dwarsuni. Widow marriage and divorce are allowed and either party can divorce the other.

Bhumija

This type is found in the central part of Baripada sub-division. As per 2001 census there were 153308 Bhumija population out of which 77154 were males and 76154 were females. In some locality intercept marriage takes places with the Mundas and they are known as Bhumija Munda. These types of people are cultivators or agriculture labourers. These people are adopting Odia language as their mother-tongue. They accept cooked food from the Brahmins and other high castes and accept water from Kurmis. Bhumijas also have taken advantage of government schemes meant for the tribals.

Bathudi

These people occupy an inferior position in the society, but still they are conscious of their self-respect and prestige. According to 2001 census, the number of people of this tribe was 107129, of which 53441 were males and 53688 were females.

The people of this type are mostly found in Panchpir Subdivision. Their distribution in Baripada and Kaptipada sub-division is however, not small. In Bamanghaty, the population of

Bathudis is low. Gait has described the Bathudis as one of the Sub-castes of the Bhuyans, while according to Russell, the Bathudis although a sub-division of the Bhuyans are regarded as inferior to them in social status.

Bhuyan

According to 2001 census, the Bhuyans numbered 57328 in the district of which, 28944 were males and 28384 were females. The members of this tribe are scattered over the large tract of the state and are found mostly in Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Bonai, Baudh, Kalahandi and Dhenkanal. The Sadar Sub-division of Mayurbhanj is the homeland of this tribe. Economic life of the Bhuyans mainly centres around shifting cultivation which is the primary source of their livelihood. Collection of minor forest produce, dry and wet cultivation, hunting and fishing also supplement their wage earnings. The people of this type have a resemblance with the people of Bathudi tribe in their food habits, clothing and also in social manners and customs. The socio-cultural life of the Bhuyan of Mayurbhanj is extremely backward like that of other tribes. There prevail many irrational and superstitious practices among them. Like other tribes they take keen interest in festivals and are fond of music and dance.

Gond

As per 2001 census there were 24616 Gond tribals, out of which 12025 were males and 12591 were females in the district. The Gonds

are the principal tribe of the Dravidian family. It is an important non-Aryan or forest tribe in India. They are marked for their simplicity, sobriety and honesty. These people are chiefly found in Panchpir Sub-division.

Besides these important tribes, other tribes are also found scattered in the dense forest of Similipal and Suliapada. Most of them are immigrant from Chhotanagpur, Midnapore and Singhbhum, but all the tribes prefer to be called permanent inhabitants of Mayurbhanj. They believe that Mayurbhanj is their original home where they still have their relation and kinsmen with whom they freely unite. In spite of their diverse traditions and languages, there is a

common socio-cultural bond which unites them. At the time of Makara Parva, Car Festival and Chaitra Parva, they not only get scope to be united among themselves but also avail opportunities to mix with non-tribal people.

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