

**CHANGING SCENARIOS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE OF DESUA
BHUMIJ TRIBAL COMMUNITY, ODISHA-AN ANALYSIS DURING THE
PERIOD 1961-2011**

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Abstract

In Odisha sixty two indigenous communities have been registered in recent decades and *DesuaBhumij* is considered as one of them. This typical human race lives in the remote areas of Balasore, Keonjhar, Koraput, Malkangiri districts of Odisha. The *DesuaBhumij* constitutes nearly 0.005% of Orissa's total tribal population. They live with others in a village but prefer to build their own wards where houses are connected with narrow lanes. They have typical house structure with bamboo and other saplings thatched with straw. The walls are plastered and decorated with designs in various colours. This tribe is divided into a number of exogamous totemic groups called clan or *killi*. In the clan system, marriage by capture, service and intrusion are also prevalent. *Sanga Baha* or widow remarriage and cross-cousin marriage are in vogue. They are mainly agriculturists but they also work in diversified occupations like mining, servicing, quarrying etc. They grow some *rabi* crops like oilseeds, pulses in their uplands and vegetables in kitchen garden. Going through their demography pattern, it is observed that population of *DesuaBhumij* has increased from 260 to 404 during the period 1961 to 2011, where 201 are males and 204 are females. Literacy rate increased to 11.70% to 56.98% and total workers increased to 143 to 174 during that period. Main workers are more in numbers than marginal workers. About their marital status, it is noticed that a total number of 239 unmarried, 143 married, 20 widows and 2 divorce cases are reported in 2011. But the total number of child had decreased during that period, 107 in 1961 to 48556 in 53. The *DesuaBhumij* no longer remains untouched in their remote forested abode. To bringing out their all-round developments, differential micro plans are running in their neighbouring districts. In term of road links, housing, livelihood pattern, healthcare and hygiene, certain developmental projects have been undertaken in those areas with major priorities to the spread of education and residential schools for boys and girls.

Keywords: Tribes, Odisha, DesuaBhumij Tribe, Livelihood.

INTRODUCTION

India is one of the nation-states of the world having largest total indigenous population compared to any other countries. These indigenous groups are indispensable part of population structure of the country. According to the 2001 census, India constitutes 8.2% tribal population. Odisha always takes an important, unique and indispensable position in the

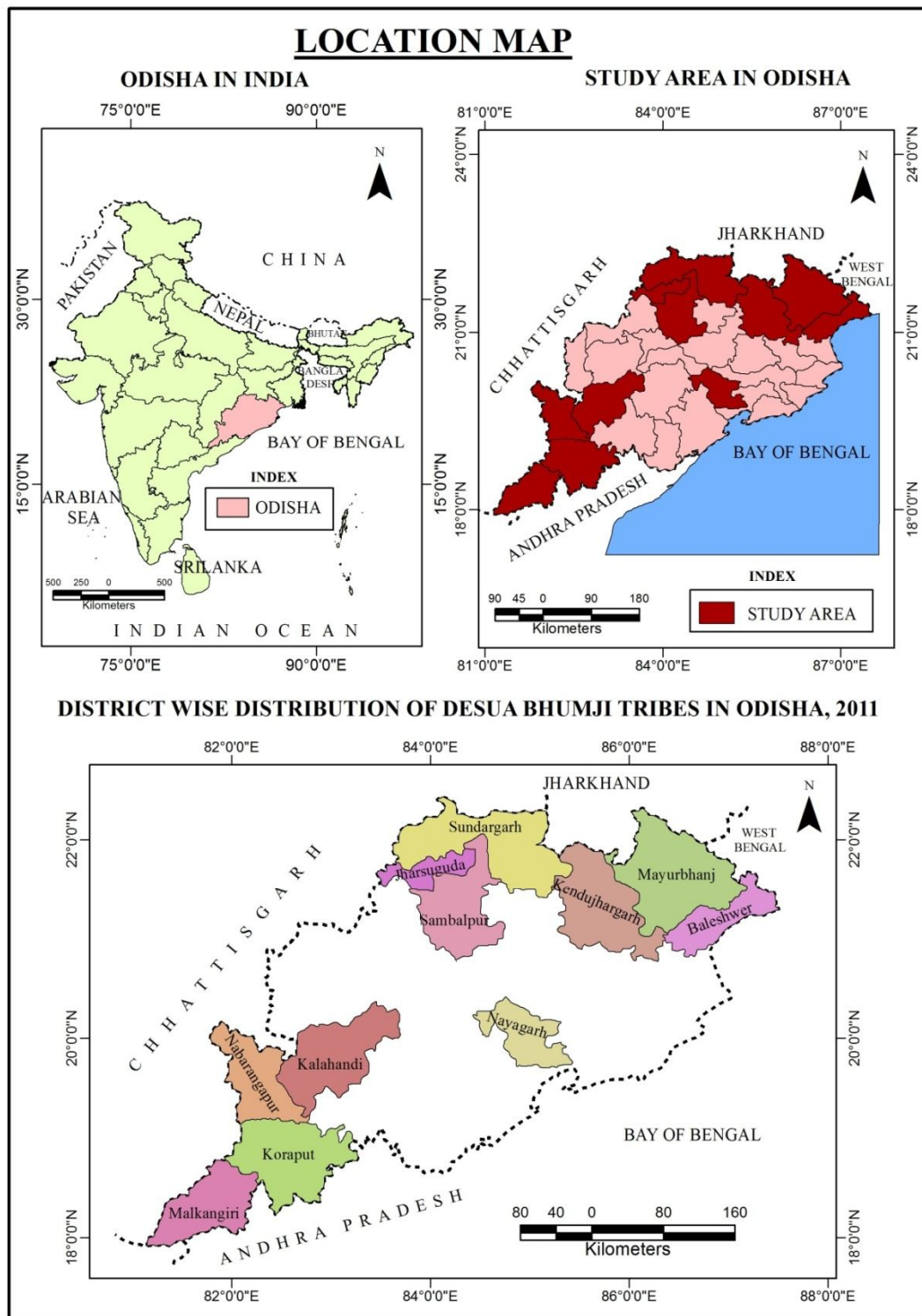
Indian subcontinent by constituting various tribal groups. Odisha carries the second highest number of tribal population in the country. According to the latest census tribal strength of this state is 22.8%. The President of India during 1956 declared sixty two various tribal communities of Odisha, as STs, of which 13 communities are treated as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG). *DesuaBhumij* tribe is considered as one of these groups for its unique physical features as well as livelihood structures. Though this tribe is considered as one of the separate tribal communities of Odisha, it is a branch of one of the Hinduized tribal group of Mayurbhanj district, Odisha. Apart from Mayurbhanj, these people are also found inhabited in the districts of Balasore, Keonjhar, Koraput, Malkangiri etc. and also a few numbers of them in the states of Jajpur, Ganjam, Kalahandi, Jharsuguda, Sundergarh and Nowrangpur.

Table No.1:

Distribution of DesuaBhumij STs Population of Odisha during the period 1961 to 2011

SERIAL NO.	NAME OF OLD DISTRICTS	NAME OF NEW DISTRICTS	YEAR					
			1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
1	Balasore	Balasore	0	0	48	331	6	70
2		Bhadrak	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Bolangir	Bolangir	0	0	01	210	0	0
4		Sonepur	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	Cuttack	Cuttack	0	0	76	206	0	0
6		Jagatsinghpur	0	0	0	0	0	0
7		Jajpur	0	0	0	0	0	0
8		Kendrapara	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	Dhenkanal	Dhenkanal	0	0	0	02	0	0
10		Anugul	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	Ganjam	Ganjam	0	0	0	86	0	0
12		Gajapati	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	Kalahandi	Kalahandi	0	0	81	72	0	09
14		Nuapara	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	Keonjhar	Keonjhar	0	44	0	105	06	35
16	Koraput	Koraput	0	03	56	0	0	56
17		Malakangiri	0	0	0	0	0	54
18		Nowrangapur	0	0	0	0	0	02
19			0	0	0	0	0	0
20	Mayurbhanj	Mayurbhanj	206	93	724	250	66	155
21	Phulbani	Kandhamal	0	0	0	0	0	0
22		Boudh	0	0	0	0	03	0
23	Puri	Puri	39	236	139	48	06	0
24		Khurda	0	0	0	0	01	0
25		Nayagarh	0	0	0	0	0	03
26	Sambalpur	Sambalpur	03	0	08	362	0	01
27		Baragarh	0	0	0	0	0	0
28		Deogarh	0	0	0	0	0	0
29		Jharsuguda	0	0	0	0	0	06
30	Sundergarh	Sundergarh	0	0	50	71	10	09

Source: Census of India, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011



Source: BMC

HISTORY AND ORIGIN OF *DESUA BHUMIJ* TRIBAL GROUP OF ODISHA

Etymologically, the term *Bhumij* means one who is born from soil. There are some portions of Hindu *Bhumij* tribal groups those originally immigrated from Tamulia, Bihar, started settling mainly in the districts of Mayurbhanj and Balasore are considered as *DesuaBhumij* tribe of Odisha. *Bhumij* being the earlier settlers were in possession of land but *Bhumij* of Mayurbhanj do not claim to be the original inhabitants of the land. Their original abodes were in *Tamulia* in Bihar and adjacent parts of Jharkhand district. According to social anthropologists, *DesuaBhumij* tribe belongs to Proto-Austroloids or Munadris group having wavy hair with black complexion.

SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND HOUSEHOLD ARTICLES

Throwing light to their settlement pattern, it is observed that the houses of their villages are scattered and not properly arranged. Most of the houses containing two rooms which do not have windows, mainly constructed with bamboo and other saplings thatched with straw. The walls are plastered and decorated with designs in various colours. Most of the tribes construct houses only after consulting to *Thakurani*, to whom they trust would protect from evil ghosts and spirits.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE, CLAN SYSTEM

Next to this, it is their family system. Most of them are nuclear type, consisting of husband, wife and unmarried children. They are patriarchal or male dominated society. This tribe is divided into a number of exogamous, descent groups called Killi (Clan). The clan system determines marriages and adult marriages are in vogue. They have their own tribal priest and rituals for marriage, death, birth and other social customs. They often conduct animal sacrifices to appease their deities, and worships spirits. They are the extreme believers of the efficiency of magic and *jadutona*. In social set up the headman is known as *sardar*, who is the supreme authority to the entire *DesuaBhumij* society.

In the clan system, marriage by capture, service and intrusion are also prevalent. *Sanga Baha* or widow remarriage and cross-cousin marriage are in vogue. Mostly, marriage may take place either at night or in the morning. Birth pollution is practiced for nine days. Mainly they cremate dead bodies but only in the cases of children below twelve years they buried the corpse. The same process is also practiced for the people who die out of cholera and chicken pox. There is nothing special about their dress as they often dress like their Hindu neighbours. The male dress consists of a shirt, a dhoti and a towel. The towel is kept on the shoulder. The women wear a sari and a blouse called *Jakit*. The sari is generally white in colour. During winter season, they often wear saris and dhotis for protection against cold. In summer, men do not wear shirts when they are in the village. Children of both the sexes do not wear anything until at the age of four to five years. The ladies also love to wear ornaments made of brass like nose rings, ear rings, bead necklaces and bangles etc. In their hair, they love to wear flowers.

RELIGION AND FESTIVAL

They practice Hinduism and other aboriginal tribal religion. Their main festivals and rituals include *raja*, *ganha*, and *makarsankranti*. Being agriculturists, they also celebrate the festivals like *chait*, *dhulla puja*, *asahri puja*, *nuakhia*, *maker sankranti* and some other Hindu

festivals. *Singbonga* and *Dharma* are their principal deities and apart from these, they worship *gram devta*, *deoshali*, *barn* etc. They are also believer of spirits and ghosts like other tribes.

They mainly depend on agriculture and are settled cultivators. They have their own land where they grow only one crop namely paddy in wetlands. They also cultivate some Rabi crops like oilseeds, pulses in their uplands and vegetables in kitchen garden. Apart from this, they work as agricultural labourers in other's field, for which they get wages per day.

After the harvesting season when men cannot find the way of wage earning, they mostly go to work in the mining and quarries sector or in tea gardens of Assam. Initially, hunting was considered as gainful economic activities. It is given up now-a-days due to the deforestation and restrictions implemented by the governments.

OBJECTIVES

Throwing light at the existing gaps in the available research findings in the relevant study, the present paper has set the following objectives covering the census period 1961 to 2011.

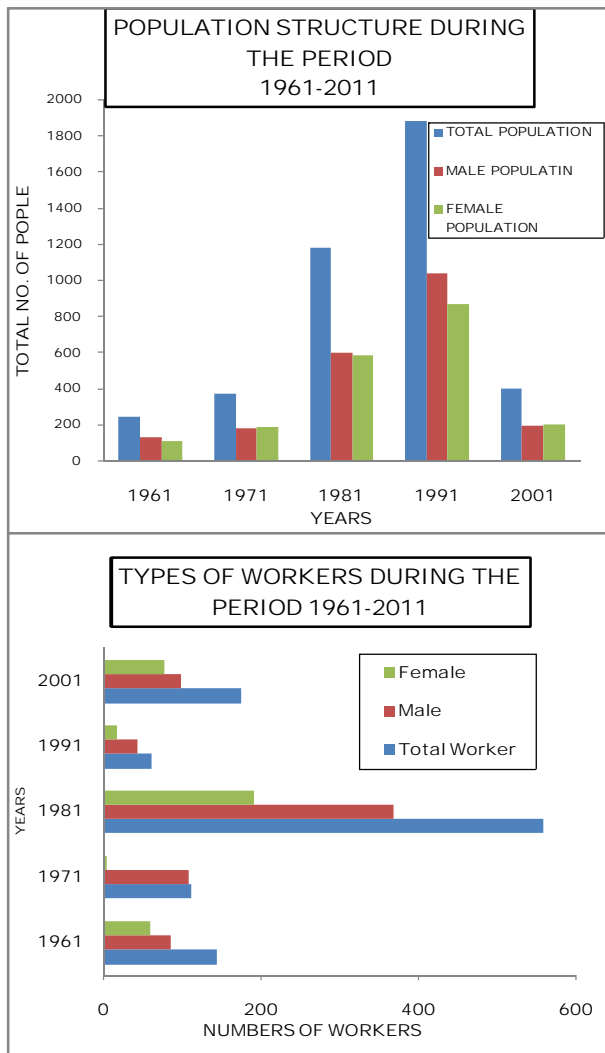
- To study the changing nature of *DesuaBhumij* population viz. male, female and child population during the period.
- To study the literacy rate as well as nature of workers during the given period.
- To understand the marital status and dependency ratio of the *DesuaBhumij* society of Odisha during the observed time span.
- To analysis overall growth rate as well as changing paradigm of *DesuaBhumij* tribal community of Odisha during the mentioned study timing.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The entire methodology of the study has been made on the basis of census data, given by SC ST Training and Research Institute, Bhubaneswar and other relevant sources of secondary data sources of *DesuaBhumij* tribal group of Odisha. A structure questionnaire has been prepared and finally statistical analysis and cartographic diagrams have been prepared.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Going through their demography pattern, it is observed that-Population of *DesuaBhumij* tribe has been increased from 260 to 404 during the period 1961 to 2011, where 201 are males and 204 are females. There are several reasons found behind increasing level of *DesuaBhumij* population i.e. in India, the state as well as central governments have made incessant efforts in the direction of tribal welfare. The government has given special attention to their educational and economic development. Tribal research institute has been established in Bhubaneswar and many sub branches have also been established in scheduled areas of the state. Efforts are being made to expand educational and working facilities in tribe prone districts.

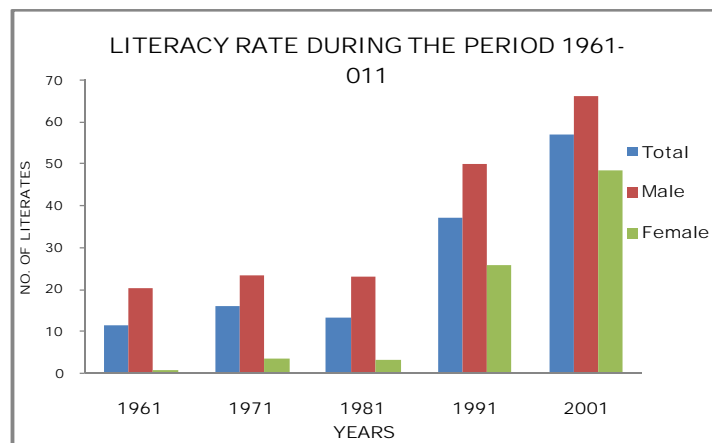


Source: Demographic profile of scheduled tribes in Odisha, 2010-2011

But one striking feature has been noticed in population structure of this group that is total number of children population has decreased during the entire study period. Which are 107 in 1961 and 53 in 2011.

Table No.: 2
Sex Ratio of DesuaBumij Community during the period 1961-2011

PARAMETERS	CENSUS YEAR					
	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Sex Ratio	810	1043	978	854	1185	810



Source: *Demographic profile of scheduled tribes in Odisha, 2010-2011*

The numbers of workers belonging to the tribe have been increased over the years. Total workforce increased from 143 to 174 during the study period.

For the economic up gradation of the tribal people, the government has enforced rules regarding land ownership and utilization of land across tribal belts in Odisha. Thousands of millions have been spent for the development of cottage industries in scheduled areas across the state. Several community projects have been established everywhere and special multi-purpose tribal blocks have been created. Grain shops have been opened to provide better quality seeds. Shifting cultivation replaced by subsistence agriculture and tribal families has been permanently placed on suitable land areas. It is also noticed that male workers are more in numbers than their female counterparts during entire study period. Main workers are also increasing day by day than marginal workers.

About their marital status, it is found that total number of 239 never married, 143 married, 20 widows and 2 divorce cases are reported in 2011. Widows remarriage are accepted in the society. Divorce on the ground of adultery, laziness and bad temper is allowed with the approval of the village *panchayat*. Marriage within own totemic group and from other community are discouraged.

It is noticed that several primary and secondary schools have been established in tribal areas where there is a provision for free education. Literacy rate increased from 11.70% to 56.98% during entire study period. Thousands of scholarships have been granted for special status for tribal people in medical, engineering and technical colleges. Posts have been reserved for them in public services. Efforts have been made to provide housing facilities in some scheduled areas. Hospitals have been opened which provide free medicines, check epidemics and cure all types of diseases. New roads have been constructed and old roads have been improved in tribal areas to increase accessibility in remote areas.

Despite an increase in absolute number of population, there is no substantial change in the earning pattern of people in the region. They continue to remain as primitive agriculturists even though the government has announced several plans and projects in the region to increase the livelihoods and living condition of the people. As things stand today, there is no noticeable change in total production, livelihood patterns and infrastructural facilities.

There is visible lack of basic amenities such as water supplies, education, housing facilities etc. While the aim is to increase the living standard of the people in the region, but the present condition shows the lack of political will and seriousness towards their development. The government should be proactive in implementing, monitoring and executing these plans in a time bound manner in order to save and improve the lives of these people in the region.

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