

# Socio-economic and cultural status of Muslims: In the Context of Birbhum

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## Abstract:

Birbhum is an important district of West Bengal, India. Siuri is the district headquarters. This district has an ancient tradition. The largest minority community in the district is Muslim. The Muslims of the district also have a history. Most of their source of income is agriculture, which means they are economically dependent on agriculture. Although the Muslims of the district also play an important role in industrial production, But the Muslims of the district are far behind economically. Compared to other religious communities, the Muslims of the district are far behind in education. Therefore, to improve this situation, the government has been taking on various projects from time to time. Muslim women are also getting the benefit of the various projects being run for women. On the other hand, the Muslim community of the district has played an important role in establishing social harmony. Sufi Muslims, or Fakir Baba, are also making people aware of various issues through Baul songs.

**Keywords:**Baul Songs,MuslimWomen,Sufism

India is a vast country consisting of people of many castes, cultures, and languages. This vast country is home to people of various religions. One of these religions is Islam. Since our discussion is about Birbhum district, we will discuss the Muslim society and culture of this district. Incidentally, we need to know that 37% of the total population of this district is Muslim. Muslims are the second largest religious group in the district and the largest minority group. In this article, I will try to discuss the society and culture of the Muslims of the said district. But at the beginning of the discussion, it is necessary to know that Birbhum district is one of the administrative districts of West Bengal, India, situated 200 km north of Kolkata. The state of Jharkhand lies on the western side of the district. Birbhum district is derived from the word 'Birbhumi', which means the land of heroes. Alternative

sources suggest that the district is named Birbhum after the 'Bir' dynasty that ruled the region. The district was the cradle of many religious and cultural movements. Birbhum was earlier known as 'Bajbhoomi'. Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang mentioned this region in his description. Minajuddin Siraj included 'Lakhnur' in Birbhum under Muslim rule in his *Tabaqat-i-Nasri*. In 1787, during the rule of the Company, the administrative district named Birbhum came into existence.

Some things have been kept in mind while choosing the subject. To inform everyone about the socio-economic and cultural aspects of the Muslims of Birbhum. To find out the causes of the socio-economic backwardness of the Muslims of the said district and to take measures to remove them. At the same time, through this writing, I am trying to highlight Birbhum district as an example of social harmony.

Various regions of this district are well developed in agriculture. Most of the rivers, like the Brahmi, Hinglo, Kope, Dwarka, etc. flow through different areas of Birbhum. Therefore, these regions have been highly developed in agriculture since ancient times. Many areas along the banks of rivers like Mayurakshi, Brahmi, Baslai, etc. flowing above Birbhum are Muslim dominated. Hence, Muslims played an important role in the development of agriculture in these areas. Significantly, 91% of the total Muslim population lives in rural areas. The crops produced here are rice, sugarcane, wheat, potato, maize, cashew, etc. In the economic policy of 1986, extensive research on agriculture was initiated in Birbhum, like many other districts.

Education is an important step in the progress of any caste. The Muslim community is also not untouched by this. At the time of independence, the condition of Muslim education in the country was very pathetic. Therefore, various policies were adopted for the progress of education. This had an impact on the Muslims in the district as well. The National Education Policy was launched in 1986 for universal primary education and the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*. The Muslim community of Birbhum benefited to some extent from this policy. However, in terms of education, the Muslims in the district are still far behind. The following table shows the comparative education rate of Muslim society with that of other religions.

Sex	Hindu	Muslim	Christian
Male	81.12%	64.61%	91.37%
Female	63.09%	49.75%	62.30%

Census Report: 2011

It is known from the above table that the Muslims of the district, especially the Muslim women, are quite backward in the field of education. To some extent, the conservative attitude of Muslims can also be held responsible for this. Muslim women have also benefited from various schemes like 'Kanyashree' launched by the West Bengal government to remove barriers to female education. Many Madrasah and higher Madrasah have been established in different parts of the district since independence for the advancement of Muslim education. Dantora High Madrasah was established in 1944 at Dantora, under the Rampurhat subdivision of Birbhum. Many more Madrasah were established, including 'Taramari e Majeed High Madrassa' in 1975, 'Mouda Palundi High Madrassa' in 1982, 'Bolpur High Madrassa' in 1905. Presently, many more lower secondary, secondary, and higher secondary Madrasah have been built in the district, and these Madrasah have played an important role in educating Muslim society.

Birbhum is also known for its social harmony. The Muslim community in the district also played an important role in establishing this harmony. Thousands of Hindus and Muslims gathered at one place every year on the 9th, 10th, and 11th of the Bengali Chaitra month around the Samadhi Sthal of Data Baba at Patharchapuri in Siuri, long before independence. Apart from this, Baul song is known to be an integral part of the folk culture of Birbhum. Muslims also actively participate in this Baul singing, known as Sufi Muslims and Fakir Baba. They make people aware of AIDS, tuberculosis, and many other diseases, along with social education, through their songs. He has been promoting and spreading communal harmony among people through songs in buses, trains, rural areas, and markets. It is pertinent to note that Patharchapuri has a memorable history of fairs and Baul songs. Apart from this, many Bihari Muslims from areas like Nalhati, Rampurhat, Saithia, etc. participate in Chhath Puja.

It is clear from the discussion that, since independence until now, the social and cultural meaning of Muslims in the district has changed a lot. Their education rate is increasing day by day, and their economic and social conditions have improved a lot. But it cannot be denied that many Muslims in the district have failed to touch modernity. Many reasons are responsible for this. The Muslims of the district should find those reasons and try to move themselves forward. There is also a need to be aware of the problems associated with population growth. So the government has to play a positive role in their further development. Educated and highly educated people also have to play an important role in taking Muslim society forward.

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