

= Birbhum district =

Birbhum district ( Bengali : ?????? ) ( pron : bi?rb?u?m ) is an administrative unit in the Indian state of West Bengal . It is the northernmost district of Burdwan division ? one of the three administrative divisions of West Bengal . The district headquarters is in Suri . Jamtara , Dumka and Pakur districts of the state of Jharkhand lie at the western border of this district ; the border in other directions is covered by the districts of Bardhaman and Murshidabad of West Bengal .

Often called " the land of red soil , " Birbhum is noted for its topography and its cultural heritage which is unique and is somewhat different from the other districts in West Bengal . The western part of Birbhum is a bushy region , a part of the Chhota Nagpur Plateau . This region gradually merges with the fertile alluvial farmlands in the east .

This district saw many cultural and religious movements in history . The Visva Bharati University at Santiniketan , established by Rabindranath Tagore , is one of the places Birbhum is internationally renowned for . Many festivals are celebrated in this culturally rich district , including the notable Poush Mela .

Birbhum is primarily an agricultural district with around 75 % of the population being dependent on agriculture . Principal industries of the district include cotton and silk harvesting and weaving , rice and oilseed milling , lac harvesting , stone mining and metalware and pottery manufacture . Bakreshwar Thermal Power Station is the only heavy industry in the district .

= = Etymology = =

The name Birbhum comes probably from the term ' land ' ( ' bhumi ' ) of the ' brave ' ( ' bir ' ) . Another theory says that the district bears the name of Bir kings , who ruled in the area . Bir in the Santali language means forests ; therefore , Birbhum could also mean a land of forests .

= = Geography = =

Situated between 23 ° 32 ' 30 " ( right above the tropic of cancer ) and 24 ° 35 ' 0 " north latitude and 87 ° 5 ' 25 " and 88 ° 1 ' 40 " east longitudes , and about 4 @, @ 545 square kilometres ( 1 @, @ 755 sq mi ) in area , this district is triangular . River Ajay forms the southern base and the apex of the triangle points north . The river forms the boundary between the districts of Birbhum and Bardhaman . The state of Jharkhand is at the northern and the western border of Birbhum and Murshidabad is at the east .

Geographically , this area lies at the northeastern end of the Chota Nagpur Plateau , as it slopes down and merges with the alluvial plains of the Ganges . The western portion of the district is historically known as Vajjabhumi or Bajrabhumi . It is an undulating upland that is generally barren . The comparatively more fertile eastern portion , constituting the northeastern Rarh region , merges with the Gangetic plain . Vajjabhumi is included in the Rarh region , and the rest of Rarh is called Sumha to differentiate it from Vajjabhumi .

= = = Climate = = =

The climate on the western side is dry and extreme but is relatively milder on the eastern side . During summer , the temperature can shoot well above 40 ° C ( 104 ° F ) and in winters it can drop to around 10 ° C ( 50 ° F ) . Rainfall is higher in the western areas as compared to the eastern areas . The annual average rainfall in Rajnagar is 1 @, @ 405 millimetres ( 55 @. @ 3 in ) and in Nanoor it is 1 @, @ 212 millimetres ( 47 @. @ 7 in ) , mostly in the monsoon months ( June to October ) .

Climate and rainfall chart of Birbhum District

= = = Rivers = = =

Several rivers flow across Birbhum . Some of these are Ajay , Mayurakshi ( Mor ) , Kopai ,

Bakreshwar , Brahmani , Dwarka , Hinglo , Chapala , Bansloi , Pagla etc . A project on the Mayurakshi that includes the Tilpara Barrage ( near Suri ) , provides irrigation for about 2 @, @ 428 square kilometres ( 937 sq mi ) . Almost all the rivers originate higher up on the Chota Nagpur plateau and flow across Birbhum in a west ? east direction . These rivers are furious during the monsoons but shrink during the dry summer months . The cyclical rotation of drought and floods of the rivers destroy lives and property , and adds to the difficulties of life in the district .

= = History = =

= = = Prehistory = = =

The area now known as Birbhum was inhabited from pre @-@ historic times . Some of the archaeological sites related to Pandu Rajar Dhibi of chalcolithic remains are located in Birbhum . Stone age implements have been found at several places in the district .

According to the old Jain book Acaranga Sutra , the last ( 24th ) great Tirthankara Mahavira had wandered through this land , referred to as the " pathless country of Ladha in Vajjabhumi and Subbbabhumi ( probably Suhma ) " in the 5th century , B.C. According to some historians , the spread of Jainism and Buddhism in the Rarh region was part of the process of Aryanisation of the area . Based on Divyabdan , a Buddhist text , Dr. Atul Sur has inferred that Gautam Buddha probably traversed this area to go to Pundravardhana and Samatata .

The Rarh region , once a part of the Maurya empire was later included in the empires of the imperial Guptas , Shashanka and Harshavardhana . After dismemberment of Harshavardhana ? s empire , the region was ruled by the Palas till 12th century AD , when overlordship of the area passed into the hands of the Senas . During the rule of the Pala dynasty Buddhism , particularly the Vajrayana cult , flourished here . In 7th century A.D. , the Chinese traveller Xuanzang described some of the monasteries he visited .

= = = Medieval age = = =

The 13th century witnessed the advent of Muslim rule in the region . However , control over the western parts of the district appears to have been nominal , and the area was ruled by the local Hindu chiefs , known as the Bir Rajas . The three towns of Hetampur , Birsinghpur and Rajnagar contain their relics . Hetampur and Rajnagar Kingdoms ruled most of Birbhum and parts of Burdwan , Maldah and Jharkhand from Dubrajpur ( meaning two kingdoms - Hetampur & Rajnagar ) . Minhaj @-@ i @-@ Siraj , the author of the Tabaqat @-@ i @-@ Nasiri , mentions Lakhnūr as the thanah ( headquarters ) of the Rarh wing of the Muslim rule and an important frontier post . The location of Lakhnūr , though not yet identified , falls in Birbhum .

Mythology has it that the forests of Vajjabhumi ( west Birbhum ) were hot @-@ spots of Hindu and tantric activities . Some authors have called Birbhum by the name Kamkoti which relates to its tantric heritage . Tantrics , including the Vajrayana , the Shaktas , and the Buddhists established many temples for tantra sadhana rituals and Shakti worship . Birbhum has many Shakti Peethas such as Tarapith , Bakreshwar , Kankalitala , Fullara near Labhpur , Sainthia and Nalhati . One of the famous Shakti worshippers of Tarapith was Bamdev , popularly known as Bama Khyapa .

= = = Modern era = = =

During the time of British East India Company , the administrative unit by the name Birbhum was formed in 1787 . Before that , it was administratively a part of Murshidabad district . In 1787 , when the official " District Beerbhoom " was established , the district was much bigger than it is now . Till 1793 , it included " Bishenpore " or Bishnupur , which is now part of the Bankura district . Till the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny , the Santhal Parganas was part of Birbhum ; the district thus sprawled up to Deoghar in the west . The immediate reason then for separating the western tribal majority areas

was the Santhal rebellion of 1855 ? 56 , which was quelled . Sidhu and Kanu are remembered in Birbhum as martyrs of this uprising .

= = Economy = =

Birbhum is primarily an agricultural district with around 75 % of the people dependent on agriculture . While 159 @. @ 3 km<sup>2</sup> ( 61 @. @ 5 sq mi ) of land is occupied by forests , 3 @, @ 329 @. @ 05 km<sup>2</sup> ( 1 @, @ 285 @. @ 35 sq mi ) of land is used for agricultural purposes . 91 @. @ 02 % of the population live in villages . Out of total 4 @, @ 50 @, @ 313 farmers ( holding 3 @, @ 20 @, @ 610 hectares of land ) , 3 @, @ 59 @, @ 404 are marginal farmers ( holding 1 @, @ 41 @, @ 813 hectares altogether ) , 63 @, @ 374 are small farmers ( holding 95 @, @ 144 hectares altogether ) , 26 @, @ 236 are semi @-@ medium farmers ( holding 76 @, @ 998 hectares altogether ) , 1 @, @ 290 are medium farmers ( holding 6 @, @ 215 hectare altogether ) , and 9 are large farmers ( holding 440 hectares of land ) . The average size of land holding per farmer is 0 @. @ 71 hectares . 6 @, @ 07 @, @ 172 people work as agricultural labourers in Birbhum . Major crops produced in the district include rice , legumes , wheat , corn ( maize ) , potatoes and sugar cane . The district has thirteen cold storages . Land with irrigation facilities in 2001 @-@ 02 totalled 2 @, @ 763 @. @ 9 km<sup>2</sup> ( 1 @, @ 067 @. @ 1 sq mi ) . There are five barrages , providing irrigation support . Canada Dam on the Mayurakshi river at Massanjore lies close to the border of Birbhum and the Dumka district in Jharkhand . Further down the Mayurakshi is the Tilpara Barrage at Suri .

Birbhum is a major centre of cottage industries . Perhaps the most notable cottage industry is a non @-@ profit rural organization named Amar Kutir . Other main industries in Birbhum are agriculture @-@ based industries , textiles , forestry , arts and crafts . Sriniketan is noted for its dairy industry and as a forestry centre . Some of the notable forms of cottage industries of Birbhum include textile ? especially cotton and locally harvested tussar silk , jute works , batik , kantha stitch , macramé ( weaving by knotting threads ) , leather , pottery and terracotta , solapith , woodcarving , bamboo and cane craft , metal works and tribal crafts . There are 8 @, @ 883 small and medium scale industries . Principal industries of the district include cotton and silk harvesting and weaving , rice and oilseed milling , lac harvesting , and metalware and pottery manufacture . Bakreshwar Thermal Power Station ( 210 MW x 3 + 210 MW x 2 under construction ) is the only heavy industry in the district .

Sainthia is known as business capital of Birbhum and an economically important town . Sainthia is the major centre for export and import of cottage industries . Huge numbers of businesses run in this town and it 's economy stands tall due to sales of agricultural based products .

In 2006 the Ministry of Panchayati Raj named Birbhum one of the country 's 250 most backward districts ( out of a total of 640 ) . It is one of the eleven districts in West Bengal currently receiving funds from the Backward Regions Grant Fund Programme ( BRGF ) .

= = Political and Administrative divisions = =

The district comprises three subdivisions : Suri Sadar , Bolpur and Rampurhat . Suri is the district headquarters . There are 17 police stations , 19 development blocks , 6 municipalities and 167 gram panchayats in this district . Other than municipality area , each subdivision contains community development blocs which in turn are divided into rural areas and census towns . There are seven urban units : six municipalities and one census town . The latest amongst the urban units to have a municipality was Nalhati in 2000 .

Before delimitation the district was divided into 12 assembly constituencies ( AC ) : Nanoor ( AC # 283 ) , Bolpur ( AC # 284 ) , Labhpur ( AC # 285 ) , Dubrajpur ( AC # 286 ) , Rajnagar ( AC # 287 ) , Suri ( AC # 288 ) , Mahammad Bazar ( AC # 289 ) , Mayureswar ( AC # 290 ) , Rampurhat ( AC # 291 ) , Hansan ( AC # 292 ) , Nalhati ( AC # 293 ) and Murarai ( AC # 294 ) . The constituencies of Nanoor , Rajnagar , Mayureswar and Hansan were reserved for Scheduled Castes ( SC ) candidates. Vidhan Sabha was elected in 2006 assembly elections , which took place before the rearrangement of parliamentary and assembly constituencies as per order of the Delimitation Commission in respect of the delimitation of constituencies in the West Bengal . Delimitation was

made effective for all elections in the state of West Bengal that was held on or after 19 February 2008 . Indian general election , 2009 was based on the newly formed parliamentary constituencies and the newly formed assembly constituencies have representatives in the 2011 elections of West Bengal .

As per order of the Delimitation Commission in respect of the delimitation of constituencies in the West Bengal , the district is divided into 11 assembly constituencies : Dubrajpur ( AC # 284 ) , Suri ( AC # 285 ) , Bolpur ( AC # 286 ) , Nanoor ( AC # 287 ) , Labpur ( AC # 288 ) , Sainthia ( AC # 289 ) , Mayureswar ( AC # 290 ) , Rampurhat ( AC # 291 ) , Hansan ( AC # 292 ) , Nalhati ( AC # 293 ) and Murarai ( AC # 294 ) . Dubrajpur , Nanoor and Sainthia constituencies are reserved for Scheduled Castes ( SC ) candidates .

Dubrajpur , Suri , Sainthia , Rampurhat , Hansan , Nalhati and Murarai assembly segments form the Birbhum ( Lok Sabha constituency ) . Bolpur , Nanoor , Labhpur , and Sainthia constituencies are part of Bolpur ( Lok Sabha constituency ) , which will contain three other assembly segments from Bardhaman district .

= = Transport = =

The Panagarh ? Morgram Highway runs through the district . All the towns and villages are connected by roads . The total length of roads in the district are : surfaced ? 2 @, @ 413 km ( 1 @, @ 499 mi ) and unsurfaced ? 4 @, @ 674 km ( 2 @, @ 904 mi ) . Against this the total length of rail track in the district is 201 @. @ 32 km ( 125 @. @ 09 mi ) , including 26 @. @ 55 km ( 16 @. @ 50 mi ) of the Ahmedpur @-@ Katwa narrow gauge track , laid in 1917 . The Sahibganj Loop of the Eastern Railway , laid in 1862 , passes through this district . There is a junction at Nalhati for the connection to Azimganj in Murshidabad district . The Andal @-@ Sainthia Branch Line connects it to the main Howrah @-@ Delhi main line at Andal .

= = Demographics = =

In 1901 , Birbhum had a population of 902 @, @ 280 , which by 1981 rose to 2 @, @ 095 @, @ 829 . According to the 2001 census data , the total population has further risen to 3 @, @ 015 @, @ 422 . The following table summarises the population distribution :

Hindus form around 65 % of the population according to 2001 census . Muslims are about 33 % of the population . There is a sprinkling of other religious groups in the population . According to the 2001 census , 29 @. @ 5 % of the population belong to the scheduled castes and 6 @. @ 7 % to the scheduled tribes . Other than the those speaking the local dialect of Bengali , there are tribal Santhals and ten other tribal communities in Birbhum with some presence , amongst whom Koda , Mahali and Oraons are more common .

According to the 2011 census Birbhum district has a population of 3 @, @ 502 @, @ 387 , roughly equal to the nation of Lithuania or the US state of Connecticut . This gives it a ranking of 84th in India ( out of a total of 640 ) . The district has a population density of 771 inhabitants per square kilometre ( 2 @, @ 000 / sq mi ) . Its population growth rate over the decade 2001 @-@ 2011 was 16 @. @ 15 % . Birbhum has a sex ratio of 956 females for every 1000 males , and a literacy rate of 70 @. @ 9 % .

= = Culture = =

The bauls of Birbhum , their philosophy and their songs form a notable representation of the folk culture of the district . Birbhum has been home to kabiyaals , kirtaniyas and other folk culture groups .

The numerous fairs in Birbhum start with Poush Mela at Santiniketan and follows through the Bengali month of Poush till Makar Sankranti . Particularly lively is the fair at Jaydev Kenduli . Festivities are organized across the seasons . People of Birbhum patronise folk entertainment programmes such as jatra , kavigan and alkap .

Many poets were born in this district , as for example , Chandidas ( Rami ) . In addition to being a confluence of Vaishnava , Shakta and Saiva cultures , Birbhum villages observe prehistoric customs like worship of gramdevta ( gram means village and devta means deity ) in many forms .

Amongst the major attractions of Birbhum are Bakreshwar , Tarapith and Patharchapuri . Birbhum has many old temples , such as the ones at Jaydev Kenduli , Surul and Nanoor , with delicate decorative tiles made of terra cotta ( burnt clay ) .

= = = Personalities = = =

Many famous people lived and worked in Birbhum , specially at Santiniketan . Nobel laureate economist Amartya Sen is one of them . Rabindranath Tagore made this district his home and established his great centre of learning , Visva Bharati University at Santiniketan . Jaydev Kenduli , which until recently was believed to be the birthplace of the 12th century Sanskrit poet Jayadeva , is on the bank of the river Ajay .

Nanoor is the birthplace of the 14th @-@ century poet Chandidas Rami . Nityananda Swami ( Nitai of the famous Nitai @-@ Gaur pair ) the co ? founder of Vaishnav religion with Shri Chityanyadev was born at Ekachakra . Tarashankar Bandopadhyay ( 1898 ? 1971 ) , one of the leading Bengali literary figures in recent times and who wrote extensively about life in Birbhum , belongs to Labhpur . Justice Sattar , a former president of Bangladesh and a former chief election commissioner of Pakistan , was born in Birbhum district in 1906 .

= = Flora and fauna = =

The eastern area of Birbhum is a part of the rice plains of West Bengal , and the vegetation includes usual characteristics of rice fields in Bengal , such as species of Aponogeton , Utricularia , Drosera , Philcoxia , Scrophulariaceae and similar aquatic or palustrine genera . In the drier western region of the district , the characteristic shrubs and herbs include species of Wendlandia , Convolvulaceae , Stipa , Tragus , Spermacoce , Ziziphus , Capparis and similar plants that grows on laterite soil . Mango , palm , and bamboo are among common trees in Birbhum . Other common species of plants are jackfruit , arjun , sal , guava , kend and mahua .

Other than feral dogs and domestic cattle , the most frequently encountered non @-@ human mammal is the hanuman , a long tailed grey langur prevalent in the Gangetic plain . Some wild boars and wolves may still be spotted in the small forests of Chinpai , Bandarsol and Charicha . Leopards and bears are not to be seen any more in the wild . Sometimes during the season when mahua trees bloom , wild Asiatic elephants from Jharkhand come in trampling crops and threatening life and property . Birds of Birbhum include a mix of hilly and plain @-@ land dwelling species like partridge , pigeon , green pigeon , water fowls , doyel , Indian robin , drongo , hawk , cuckoo , koel , sunbird , Indian roller , parrot , babbler , and some migratory birds .

Ballabhpur Wildlife Sanctuary near Santiniketan was declared a sanctuary in 1977 . Economically important trees are planted here and blackbucks , spotted deer , jackals , foxes and a variety of water birds live in its 2 km<sup>2</sup> ( 0 @.@ 8 sq mi ) .

= = Literacy and education = =

According to the 2011 census Birbhum district had a literacy rate of 70 @.@ 9 % . up from 62 @.@ 16 % in 2001 . In 1951 census , the literacy rate was 17 @.@ 74 % . It increased to 48 @.@ 56 % in 1991 .

The growth of literacy in the last decade of the twentieth century was particularly remarkable with special emphasis on the eradication of illiteracy . While it is feared that Birbhum may not be able to fulfill the national objective of sending all children in the age group 6 ? 14 years to school by 2010 , efforts are on in that direction .

The district has 127 libraries supported by the government , one private library and one district library .

## = = Sports = =

One of the most popular outdoor sports in the villages of Birbhum used to be danguli ( literal meaning " ball and stick " ) . However , in recent times cricket has replaced some of its popularity . A sport that can be played outdoors and indoors and is popular among children is marbles , which involves projecting a striker bead with fingers to hit an ensemble of black or green glass beads .

In addition to cricket , the other most popular outdoor sports of this district are football and kabadi and volleyball .