

## **STUDY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF NAGESIA-TRIBES IN PALAMAU PLATEAU, JHARKHAND**

M.K. Joseph

Principal, St. Xevier's College, Mahuadanr, Latehar, Jharkhand

### **Abstract:**

The Nagesias are a primitive tribe. Practically all the Nagesias depend on land and agriculture for survival. Life is hard for them. They are not agreeable to parting with their land form money. Very few Nagesias have income from employment. The employed Nagesias also depend upon agricultural land. Maize is the mainstay of economy of the villages. The people cultivate both food grains and cash crops to meet their needs. The jungles provide them additional income. There are no wells from which they can get drinking water. The springs in the jungles are the source of drinking water. Ground water is deep; wells cannot be dug. According to the Nagesias, the entire land is cultivable. They cultivate only once a year because they depend on rain. According to the tribal myths the Nagesias have been ousted from the more fertile tracts of their original habitat by the invasion and infiltration of superior people. They were originally from Madhya Pradesh and when the alien forces attacked them in the 12<sup>th</sup> century; they fled from there and settled down in the thick forests of Palamau Plateau. There is a myth about the emergence of three groups of the Nagesia tribals. In the beginning the tribe was one without any divisions. But once in the remote past, a Nagesia ancestor had three wives. He had married the first wife by applying vermilion or sindur on her forehead; therefore the children born of her came to be known as Sinduria. He had acquired his second wife by 'Sagai', that is second marriage, and instead of vermilion he applied tel or oil on her forehead. So her children are called Telia. His third wife was just a concubine who he accorded the status of wife by applying 'Dhur' or dust on her forehead. Thus, the children begotten of her are known as Dhuria. In short, the Nagesia tribe is a very primitive tribe. They have a distinct culture and tradition which they are determined to preserve. Their main occupation is cultivation. They are sensitive about environmental deterioration. Land is their main source of income. Their society is community based; community life is co-operative and is base on sharing. Decisions are taken jointly through consensus. Their society is classless and egalitarian. They are close to nature. The forests are part of their dwelling place. When they have nothing to eat they turn to the jungles for its fruits and green 'Saag' leaves. They are a pre-literate tribe and less than 10% of the total Nagesia population on the Palamau Plateau are today literate. The major finding is that the life of the Nagesia tribe is centred around land, agriculture and jungle. There is a saying among the tribals: "Land is life for us, if somebody take away our land, they take away our life." By taking their land for bauxite mining they are deprived of their very life.`

**Key- Words:** Nagesia tribes, Occupation, Socio-economic Status, Palamau Plateau, Jharkhand.

**Introduction:** Human beings need nature for their survival and nature considers human beings as companions living together in harmony. There is an existential relationship between the human and human, and the human and nature. There is peaceful co-existence when the relationship is friendly. But oftentimes human beings think that they are the master of the earth, of the nature and the environment around them. They also think that the earth belongs to them and they have a right to make use of the earth or to exploit the earth for their needs and development. This thinking leads humans to exploit the natural resources [1, 2]. Nagesia tribals of Palamau Plateau belong to two religious groups, the traditional saran religion and Christianity. The saran religion is also known as ‘Sanathan Dharam’. They offer sacrifices in the saran or worship place. They are proud of their religion and religiosity. Saran is a sacred place in the jungle where the tribals offer sacrifices. The Nagesias have close affinity towards saran, their worship place. They fear the destruction of their saran by the bauxite mining[3, 4].

#### **Socio-Economic Status of the Respondents:**

**Age:** Age of the respondents varied from twenty to seventy years.

**Table 1: Age of the Respondents:**

Age group	Frequency	Percentage
20 – 29	12	19
30 – 39	22	35
40 – 49	09	14.3
50 – 59	11	17.55
60 – 69	08	12.7
70 +	01	01.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>

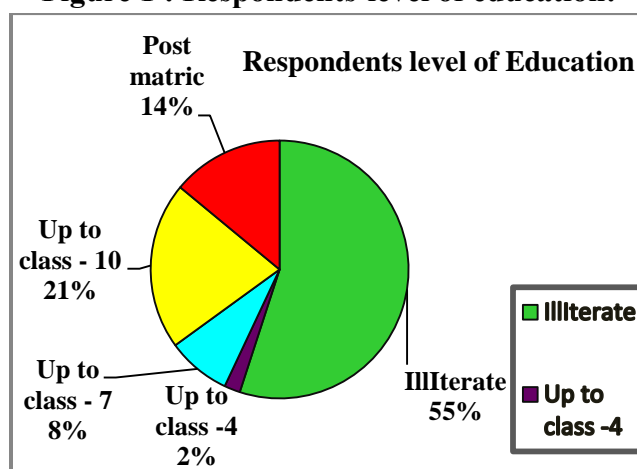
The mean age of the respondents is 40 years with a standard deviation of 8.9 years.

**Gender:** Most of the respondents were males. The researcher wanted any member of the household to give the interview. In most of the houses men came forward to give the interviews. Hence the female respondents are very few[5]. Table number two shows the male, female representation.

**Table 2: Gender representation:**

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Male	58	92
Female	05	08
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>

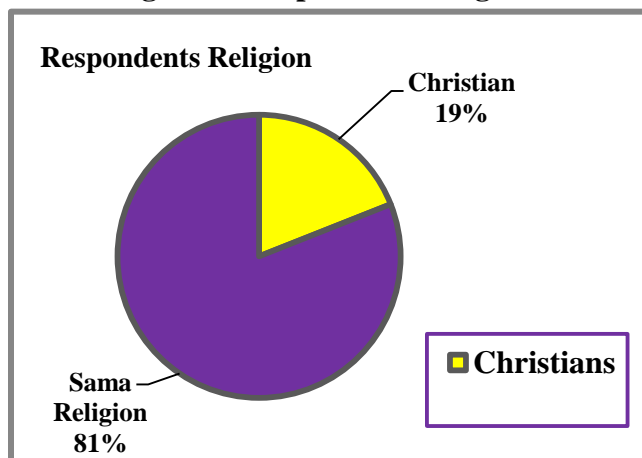
**Education:** According to the figures the larger population is illiterate. That is the significant finding of the study. This corresponds to the Jharkhand state's educational level [6]. Fifty-eight percent of the total Jharkhandi population is illiterate. There is a small group of post-matriculantes who have either done teacher's training or studied up to graduation. Another small but significant group have studied up to class ten [7].

**Figure 1 : Respondents' level of education:**

This shows that there is a growing awareness of education and its importance. Another significant finding is that even though the vast majority of the respondents are illiterate, they are educating their children [8,9].

**Religion:** The vast majority of the respondents belong to the traditional tribal religion known as the "Sarna Religion" or "Sanathan Dharam". Sarna is a sacred place in the jungles where the tribals offer their sacrifices [10,11].

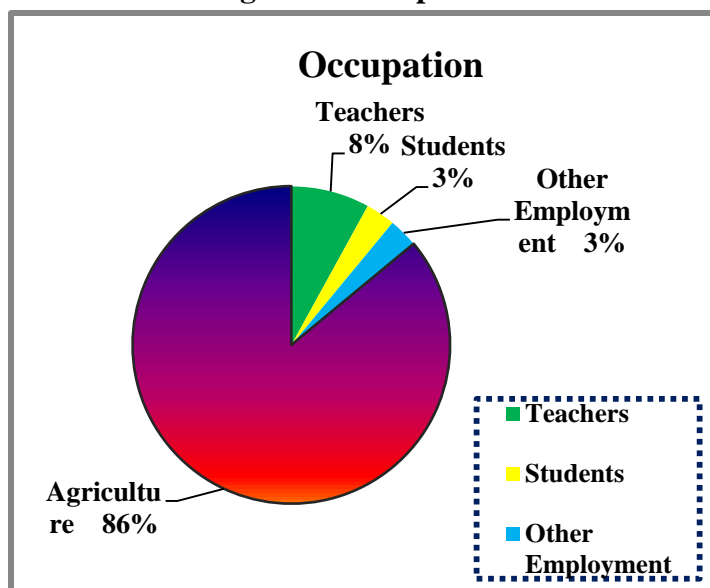
**Figure 2: Respondents religion:**



The rest of the respondents are tribals who are Christians.

**Occupation:** The significant finding is that the vast majority of the respondents are agriculturists and depending on land. It is also worthy of note that the entire set of respondents is engaged in agriculture[12]. Even the few teachers who earn about two thousand rupees per month, think that they too depend very much on agriculture and hence land [13].

**Figure 3: Occupation:**



For the vast majority there is no other source of income and livelihood except what they get from the land [14, 15].

**Type of family:** The significant finding is that the Nagesias continue to live in joint families. The joint family system enables them to keep the land undivided. They believe that once the family is divided the land also is divided [16, 17]. The entire family is involved in the agricultural work. More the members more the work that could be done and they believe crops would be better as a result. The land they own is gifted to them by their ancestors. Once the ancestral family land is divided the strength of the family decreased. Division of families results in dividing the land[18]. Hence the continuation of the joint-family system has a relation to land and agriculture[19].

**Table 3: Type of family:**

Type of family	Frequency	Percentage
Joint family	48	76.2
Nuclear family	13	20.7
Extended family	02	03.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>

Although this is the age of nuclear families, the Nagesia tribals continue to live in joint families. The vast majority (76.2%) of the total respondents continue to live in joint families[20].

**Number of Children:** The majority of Nagesias prefer to have more than two children. A significant number of respondents have more than three children[21]. Those couples who have one or two children are young and there is every possibility of their having more children.

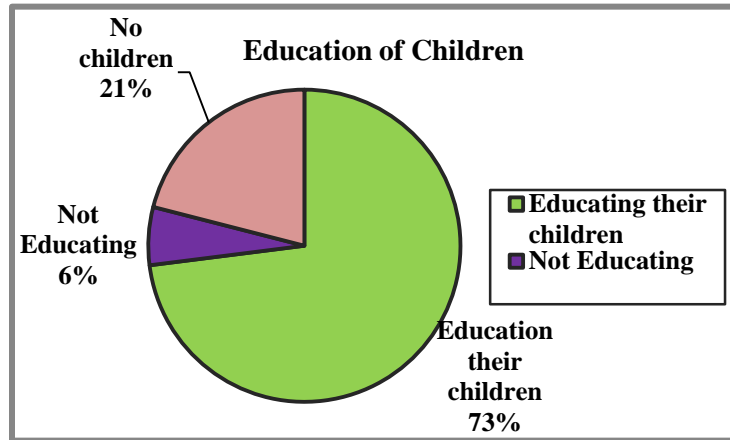
**Table 4: Number of children:**

Number of children	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 2	19	30.2
3 – 4	26	41.2
5 – 6	08	12.7
Above 6	02	003.2
Unmarried	08	12.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the 1981 census, it is a common factor that the tribals of south Palamau in general have four to five children[22].

**Education of the children:** The vast majority of the respondents are educating their children. Some respondents are either unmarried or not having children of school-going age. Only a small minority (6.3%) are not educating their children[23].

**Figure 4: Education of Children:**

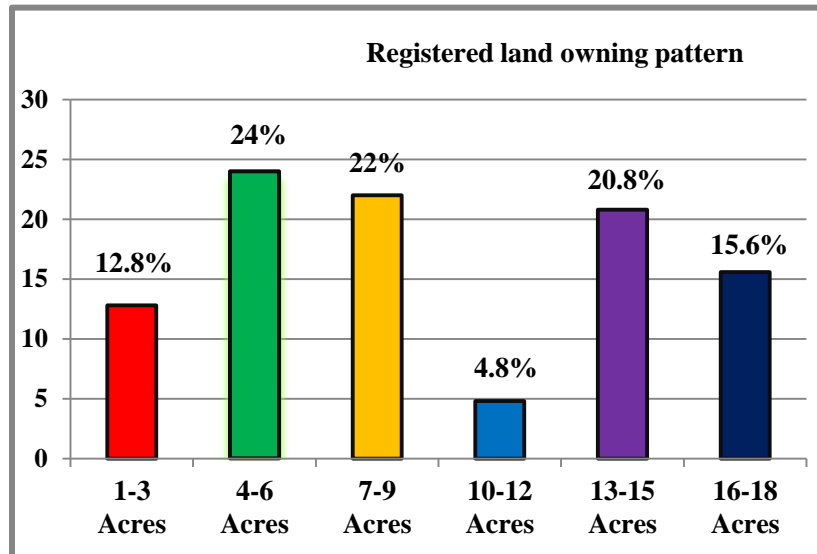


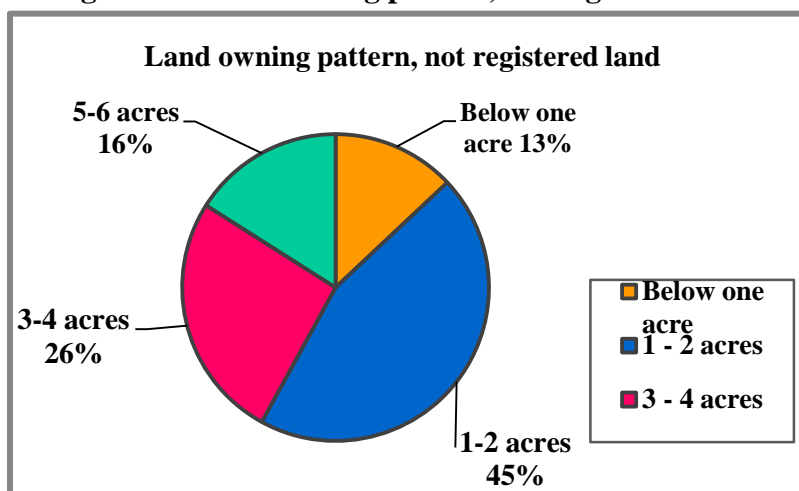
Almost 94% of the respondents are either educating, or likely to educate their children.

**Land – owning Pattern:** There are two types of Land owning patterns which are as follows:

**Registered Status of Land:** The significant finding is that the vast majority of the respondents (96.9%) hold both registered and unregistered land, whereas two respondents have only unregistered land[24]. They have about one acre of land each which they have been occupying since long but they don't have the required registration papers for their land [25]. On a whole the respondents have more registered land than unregistered land as is shown in the graph and in the pie chart.

**Figure: 5- Registered land owning pattern:**



**Figure 6 – Land owning pattern, not registered land**

**Land Utilization:** All the respondents said that their whole land is cultivable, even though some parts of their land are rocky. They said they make use of such land and cultivate seasonal crops. There are variations in the fertility of land: some land is more fertile than other land but all land is cultivable [26]. This is very important because outsiders look at the rocky land and say such land is not useful for cultivation.

**Annual Income of the Family:** The annual income of the family varied from rupees five thousand to forty thousand. A small minority of respondents (12.7%) has their annual income up to rupees five thousand. A significant number (42.8%) falls within the category of rupees six thousand to ten thousand. The significant finding is that the annual income almost corresponds to the number of acres of land one holds[27]. The more land they hold, the more income they have with and increase in the annual income those who are employed have more income – income from employment as well as income from the land.

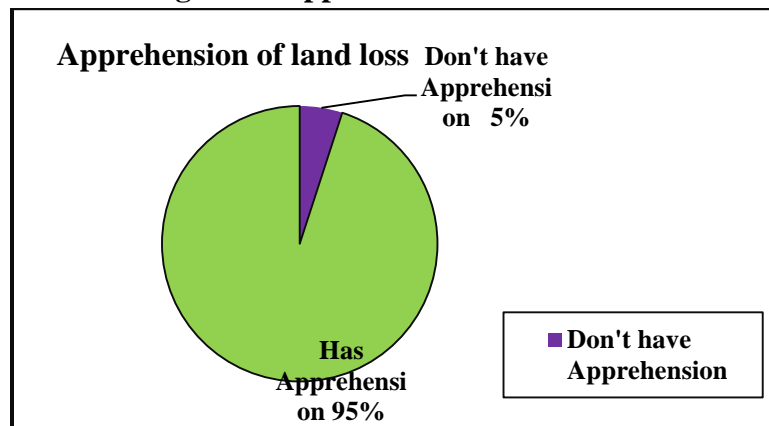
**Table 5: Annual Income of the Family:**

Annual Income	Frequency	Percentage
Up to Rs. 5,000	08	12.7
Between Rs. 6,000 – Rs. 10,000	27	42.8
Between Rs. 11,000 – Rs. 15,000	12	19
Between Rs. 16,000 – Rs. 20,000	09	14.3
Between Rs. 21,000 – Rs. 25,000	02	03.2
Between Rs. 26,000 – Rs. 30,000	01	01.6
Between Rs. 31,000 – Rs. 35,000	02	03.2
Between Rs. 36,000 – Rs. 40,000	02	03.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>

The majority of respondents (55.5%) said that their annual income is not sufficient for their living[28].

**Apprehension of loss of land:** The vast majority of respondents (95.2%) fear that their land would be lost due to bauxite mining [29].

**Figure 7: Apprehension of land loss:**



A small percentage of the respondents are confident that they would not lose their land. The reason for this confidence is the long distance between the present mining site and their land.

**Crops Cultivated:** All the respondents cultivate maize, jattangi, gondali and mustard. Some along with these also cultivate paddy, madva and ground-nuts. The main cultivation and staple food of the area is maize [30].

Maize, jattangi, gondali, mustard	52.3%
Maize, jattangi, gondali, mustard, paddy	23.8%
Maize, jattangi, gondali, mustard paddy, madva	15.9%
Maize, jattangi, gondali, mustard, paddy, madva and ground-nut	08%

**Frequency of Cultivation:** All the respondents said that the cultivation is done once a year. Their cultivation depends upon rain. If the monsoon fail, the crops also fails. Apart from cultivating the main crops such as maize, jattangi and gondali, they also cultivate some vegetables[31].

**Land owning Pattern:** The Nagesias own both registered and unregistered land. Registered land is that which is given in 'Patta' and registered in the name of somebody in the household. Unregistered land has no legal proof to claim it. They have been cultivating the land. Under the Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act, the tribals can claim ownership of such land if they have been cultivating it for a period of five years or more [32].



The major observation is that most of the leased land is unregistered. The government claims, it belongs to them. The tribals have created a new slogan out of this to oppose the Birlas by saying “*Kagaz tumhara hai, zamin hamara hai*”. “You have the papers (acquisition of lease), we have the land”.

**Apprehension for Land Loss:** As the researcher has already found out, there is a close affiliation to land. The Nagesias’ perception is, they would lose their land once the mining operation begins. The company asks only a portion of their land for mining. The Nagesias perceive that once part of their land is given for mining it would lead to losing full land and eventual uprooting. Their determination to prevent mining at any cost is based on the reality that developmental activities in Chhotanagpur invariably results in exploitation of tribals and alienation of their land. The Nagesias have come to this conclusion because of their knowledge about similar mining projects in the neighbouring places where people were forced to give away their land and quit the place.

**Conclusion:** The Nagesias are a primitive tribe. Practically all the Nagesias depend on land and agriculture for survival. Life is hard for them. They are not agreeable to parting with their land for money. Very few Nagesias have income from employment. The employed Nagesias also depend upon agricultural land. Maize is the mainstay of economy of the villages. The people cultivate both food grains and cash crops to meet their needs. The jungles provide them additional income. There are no wells from which they can get drinking water. The springs in the jungles are the source of drinking water. Ground water is deep; wells cannot be dug. The major finding is that the life of the Nagesia tribe is centred around land, agriculture and jungle. There is a saying among the tribals: “Land is life for us, if somebody take away our land, they take away our life.” By taking their land for bauxite mining they are deprived of their very life. According to the Nagesias, the entire land is cultivable. They cultivate only once a year because they depend on rain. The Birla company men viewed the land as stony, uncultivable and the best use of such land is for mining.

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