

## **Investigating transition in Socio-Economic life of Agaria tribe of Sonbhadra (Uttar Pradesh)**

**Dr. Kamruddin**

**Associate Professor**

Department of Sociology

Higher Education, Uttarakhand

### **Abstract:**

The paper highlights the changing pattern of socio-economic life in the Agaria tribe, which inhabited in Sonbhadra district of Uttar Pradesh. The Agaria live in a multi-ethnic village and hence they interact closely with other communities. Inter-relation among the different societies was found not only in the village but also in inter-village services socio-economic interdependence exists. Various relationship exists between Agaria and other communities in term of the Jajmani system and cultivator-labor relationship. Presently some the Agaria are using innovative equipment. Modern recreational and entertainment items are in use. The Agaria have changed our economic activities. Earlier they were engaged in Iron smelting and mining, at present this community is involved in performing some other economic activities. Animal husbandry, agricultural labour is their present subsidiary occupations. The Agaria are influenced by modernity's presently some Agarias are using innovative equipment. Modern recreational and entertainment items are in use like television, mobile, music system etc. They are enjoying with all beneficiary schemes, implemented by state and central government

**Key Word:** Agaria, Jajmani, Socio-economic life, Tradition.

### **Introduction:**

Tribal culture is speciality of Indian society. There has been an intermingling of the various tribe. The tribal population are found almost part of India. Tribal population constitute about 8.6 % of tribal population of India (Census of India, 2011). As many as 550 tribal communities as residing in India, of whom 75 are declared as primitive tribal group, who spread across the country. The tribal population is identified the aboriginal inhabitants of our country. They are seen in almost every state of India for centuries, they have been living a simple life based on the natural environment. They still depend on hunting agriculture and fishing. All those tribal people have their own culture, tradition, language and lifestyle. According to L.P. Vidyarthi Tribe is a social group with the definite territory, common name, common descent, common culture, the behaviour of the endogamous group, common taboos, existence of distinctive social and political system and full faith in leaders and self-sufficiency in their distinct economy. (Vidyarthi 1981). D. N. Majumdar says "A tribe is a social group with territorial affiliation, endogamous, ruled by tribal officer, hereditary or other-

wise united in language or dialect, recognizing social distance with other tribe or castes with any social obloquy attaching to them as it does in the caste structure, following tribal traditions, belief and custom, illiberal of naturalization of ideas from alien sources. Above all conscious of homogeneity of ethnic and territorial integration.

Uttar Pradesh is the most populated state of India and is also home to many tribal communities'. Some of the main tribes in the state are Pahriya Agaria, Baiga, Bhuiya, Pathari (in district of Sonbhadra and Varanasi) Gond, Dhuriya, Nayak, Pathari, Raj Gond (in district of Maharaj Ganj, Sidharth Nagar, Gorakhpur, Deoria, Kushinagar, Mau, Azamgarh, Jaunpur, Balia, Gazipur, Varanasi, Mirzapur and Sonbhadra) Panika (in district of Sonbhadra and Mirzapur), Sahriya (in district of Lalitpur) Buksha, Tharu etc. The schedule tribe population of Uttar Pradesh 1134273 at 2011 census constituting meagre 0.57% of the total state population and is mere 0.6% of total tribal population of India. Agaria is a Dravidian tribe found in hilly part of Sonbhadra district of Uttar Pradesh. According to Central Province Gazetteer in 1981 "The found scanty numbers only south of some river only 481 males and 557 females in all of the 938 souls. The Agaria of Sonbhadra confined themselves almost entirely to mining and smelting iron. They are certainly quite different people from those describe by Colonel Dalton and Mr. Risely in Chota Nagpur (ethnology 322 Tribe and caste of Bengal) Who claim to be Kshatriya immigrants from the neighbourhood of Agra and live by cultivation. The Agaria of Sonbhadra seems to be almost certainly of non-Aryan Agaria. Colonel Dalton and Mr. Reseley describe the people of name as a subdivision of Korvas, who are undoubtedly Dravidian (Ethology 221 and Tribe and castes I 4). It is with these people that Agaria of Sonbhadra are almost certainly connected.

**Traditionally** the Agaria smelter worker and miners. The name Agaria is derivate Hindi word "Aag" meaning fire and from the associating with the furnace used for smelting Iron ores. They also call themselves "Lohar" (Blacksmith from the word 'lala' meaning iron). According to local legends, They are descendent of three brothers Baghel, Barangia and Sonmoniya. Incidentally, Baghel was elder brother and was recognised as the king. The ethnographic and historical account of the Agaria exist in the writing of Crook, Russell and Hiralal the Agaria migrated from the Rewa district of Madhya Pradesh, and settle in Sonbadra district after a confrontation within the brotherhood. They could carry on their business in peace in British territory. Their former headquarter was the village of Rajoura and their first settlement in Sonbhadra was in that of Khairahi of Duddhi Tahshil.

**In** appearance, The Agaria are very closely allied to Dravidian tribe such known Korwa and Pahriya etc. But they have a particularly gaunt appearance and worn expression of countenance. Which is undoubtedly the result of the serve occupation which they follow. The Agaria have several totemistic subdivision called Kuri such as Ahirwar, Banjhakwar, Bajutheb, Goirar, Markam and Sonwan which regulated marriage alliances. But according to Crook there eight exogamous sects of totemistic among the Agarias of Sonbhadra viz. Markam, Goirar, Parswan, Sanwan, Bargwar, Banjhkwar, Gidhle and Bajantheb. The Agaria practice endogamy at the community level and exogamy at Kuri level. In Agaria polygamy is

permitted, Agaria may as have many wives as he can afford to purchase and maintain. The senior wife (Jethi Mehrarua) is head of the household; she joins her husband in the family worship and she receives a degree of respect among the clansman at marriage etc. In the primitive period, the age for marrying girls was between five and ten, the parents were disgraced if they did not marry their daughters at an early age. Their marriages usually take place in the light half the month of Magh (January – February). There is no real divorce merely expulsion of the faithless wife from hearth and home. The only ground for expulsion is proof of the wife's adultery to the satisfaction of the clansman. Widow marriage in Sagai form is allowed. Adoption is permitted to a sonless man or one whose son is permanently expelled from caste. Girls cannot be adopted. There no ceremonies during pregnancy, the husband is allowed to do no work on the day of his wife's delivery and has to take the first sip of the cleansing draught which is given her after delivery. He does not cohabit with his wife for a month after her confinement. There is no regular ceremony on arrival at puberty. The dead except young children and those dying of small-pox are cremated in the jungle. The Agaria call themselves Hindus but worship none of the regular Hindu deities. The festival of Agarias are the Phagua or Holi and the Baisakhi called after the months in which they occur. At both, they to deceased ancestors and drink liquor. They have no other Hindu festival, nor at the Phagua do they light the holly fire as Hindu do. Before they offer the black Goat to Lohasur Devi they worship it, and before sacrificing it pour water on its head. Ancestors are worshipped to ward off evil from the household. Agarias have their bodies tattooed. This is done both to married and unmarried girls as soon as they attain the age of puberty. A widow cannot get himself tattooed unless she marries again by the Sagai forms. They respect only Sakhu and Sal tree which is used at these marriage. There nothing peculiar about their clothes, expect their extreme scantiness. The men wear rings of brass or gold in the ear-lobes. The women wear ear ornaments made of palm- leaf (Tarki), glass bangles (Churi) heavy anklets (Pai) and arm brass ring (Ragari) with bead necklaces on the throat. They eat all kind of meat, including beef. There are several Taboos seen in Agaria, They will not touch a menstrual woman or their younger brother wife, or mother-in-law, or a connection through the marriage of children (Samdhin). They will not name their wives or elders of the family or the dead. Both nuclear and mixed families have been noticed among the Agaria, nuclear families being more numerous. Inter-personal relation are good among the family members. The Agaria business is smelting and forging iron. But at present, they practice various occupations. They are a small landholding community, so besides agriculture and Iron-smelting they make agricultural implements as their traditional occupation. Besides, Animal husbandry and agricultural labourers are their present subsidiary occupations. The traditional tribal council (Panchayat) exists at which all adult males attend and is called when it is necessary. The members are summoned by the president of the council (Mahto) who circulates a root of turmeric among them. The council deals with caste matters, such as adultery, fornication and the like. The order are enforced as the usual way. They have their own folklore and folk song, i.e. karma, popularly sung by both men and women while dancing. The musical instruments are Dholak and Gbungar.

**The** Agaria are a small ethnic group of Uttar Pradesh with the population 17376 in 2011. They are recognized as scheduled tribe in Sonbhadra district, state of Uttar Pradesh (Act 2002). They constitute 1.53% of the total population of STs of state. They have a very low literacy rate 24.6% out of which men are 33.4% and women are 15.1%. Most of the women are illiterate in this community. They have only 3217 (18.5%) people are main worker in which maximum are agricultural labour.

### **Review of literature-**

Relevant literature provides useful direction and suggestion for any research. This exercise with help to away from duplicacy and wrong assumption. Many studies have been done on the changing pattern of tribal life. But in reference to Agaria tribe, there are limited study are found. In the present research paper the review of literature is selected from various Journals and articles

**1. Crook W.** (The tribe and caste of the North-western provinces and Oudh VOL. I. 1896) highlights some of the basic feature of Agaria tribe of Sonbhadra. He writes in pages between 01 to 13 in detail about the Physical appearance, organisational structure, tribal council, festivals, tattooing, food, occupation, social uses, marriage rules, family structure, religious beliefs and ceremonies of Agaria tribe. Crook also write that how Agaria of Sonbhadra prepare the iron from ores, And why they leave our traditional profession.

**2. Verrier Elvin** (The Agaria 1942) studies the Agaria tribe who are iron smelter found in Central India, Elvin wrioe the Agaria's customs and habits. Elvin says that Agaria have highly developed totemic civilization with its distinctive mythology affecting every aspect of life. Elvin also scrutinizes the history, demographics, magic, and economy in order to provide an analysis of the richness of the craft and culture of this slowly decaying society. This book is the based format for any study of Agaria.

**3. Keshari Arjun das** (Adivasi Jeevan 1983) classified the tribes of Uttar Pradesh. He recognized the Agaria tribes as a group of dancer, musician, hunters, and Artistic tribes. Keshari says that The Agaria are experts in removing iron from rock and soil. They make Shovel, Geti, Mattock, Scud, Hoe, Pitcher, Bucket, Knife Pliers etc. by melting iron. Dr. Keshari also writes about the folk and culture of Agaria.

**4. Tiwari Shiv Kumar and Kamal Sharma** (Tribes of Madhya Pradesh 2009) write the distribution of the population of Agaria in Madhya Pradesh. They says that The God "Lohasur" is chief God of Agaria.

**5. Naz Shama** (Status of women in Agaria tribe of Sonebhadra District. 2017) writes that how Agaria women play role in socio-economic affair of Agaria communities. Dr. Shama says in the present scenario the Agaria women play an important role to improve the economic condition of the family. Due to implementations of Panchayati Act. Agarian women also participate in panchayat election and some of them elected as village head (Gram Pradhan) ward member and block development council member, and play a dynamic role in local politics.

**Objective of study**

The main objective of this study is to know about this little known tribe that is the Agaria of Uttar Pradesh. The Agaria Tribe will be analysed following perspectives, the objectives of the study can be enumerated in the following ways.

1. To study the socio-cultural feature of Agaria tribe holistically.
2. To explore the social identity of the Agaria tribe through examination of socio-economic condition.
3. To identify the problem faced by the Agaria in the present day and to suggest Remedial measures.

**Methodology**

Methodology is a systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. There are various methods to conduct a research study. But in present studies, the research design is descriptive because Agaria tribe is little known community. The purpose of an exploratory study is to collect facts, which may help to formulate a precise research problem. Present study was conducted purposely in Sonbhadra district of Uttar Pradesh. Sonbhadra district has 8 blocks, out of which Chopan block has been selected as it has a wide population of Agaria tribe. There are 92 villages in Chopan block, out of which one village **Jogaal** has been selected for the study. The village has 3934 homes and the population of the village is 21736. In this study, a purposive sampling method was used 110 respondent, who was head of the family were selected for this research work. For the purpose to collect the primary data, Interview schedule was prepared to evaluate to changing pattern of life in Agaria. Books, Journals, Articles, Newspaper, Website, and Theses are used as a secondary source of data.

**1. Demographical Profile of respondent.****(I) . Age of respondents**

S.N.	Age group	Frequency	Percentage
1.	20 – 30 year	19	17.27
2.	31 – 40 year	52	47.27
3.	41 – 50 year	26	23.64
4.	51 – 60 year	11	10.00
5.	61 – 70 year	02	01.82
6.	71 < above year	00	00.00
	Total	110	100%

The majority of the respondent in the sample is 52 (47.27) belong to the Age group of 31-40, then 26 (23.64%) respondent are from age group of 41-50 year, 19(17.27% ) respondent from 20-30 year, 11 (10.00%) respondent from 51-60 age group. There are only 02 (1.82 %) respondent are found over 60 years of age.

**(ii). Marital Status**

<b>S.N.</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Unmarried	01	00.90
2.	Married	98	89.09
3.	Widow	02	01.82
4.	Widower	04	03.64
5.	Divorced	05	04.55
	Total	110	100%

In present study, most of respondents are married. Out of them 98 (89%) are living with their wives, 04(3.64%) are widower, 05(4.55%) are divorced, 02(1.82%) are widow. only one 01(0.9%) respondent is found unmarried.

**(iii). Household Income**

<b>S.N.</b>	<b>Income per month</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Less < Rs.5000	76	69.09
2.	Rs.5001 - Rs.10000	13	11.82
3.	Rs.10001 - Rs.15000	09	08.18
4.	Rs.15001 - Rs.20000	06	05.45
5.	Rs.20001 < Rs.25000	04	03.64
6.	Rs.25001 < Above	02	01.82
	Total	110	100%

The condition of income of respondents is not good. Only 02 (1.82%) respondents whose income are above 25000/-are found during study. Mostly income levels of respondents are very low.76(69.09%) earn less than Rs.5000,13(11.82%)respondents have between 5001-10000.The household income of 09(08.18%) respondents are Rs.10001-15000, 06(5.45%) respondents are Rs.15001-20000 and 04(3.64%) have monthly household income is Rs.20001-25000.

**(iv) . Education.**

<b>S.N.</b>	<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Illiterates	57	51.81
2.	Primary Level	33	30.00
3.	Junior High School Level	10	09.10
4.	High school Level	05	04.55
5.	Intermediate Level	03	02.72
6.	Graduation/ Post graduation Level	02	01.82
	Total	110	100%

The above table show the level of education of respondents 51.81% Agaria are illiterate while 30.00% are educated up to primary level. 9.10% of the respondents are educated up to junior high school, 4.55% are high school and 2.72% are educated up to intermediate level. Only 1.82% of respondents were found graduates and post graduates.

## 2. Socio-economical Pattern

### (i). Occupational pattern.

S.N.	Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Government Service	02	01.82
2.	Cultivation	03	02.73
3.	Agricultural &None A gricultural Labour	65	50.09
4.	Traditional work (Blacksmith)	25	22.73
5.	Animal husbandry	04	03.63
6.	Others	11	10.00
	Total	110	100%

As per the researcher observation 65 (50.09%) respondents are working as A gricultural And Non Agricultural labours, 25(22.73%) respondents were involved in our traditional profession Iron smelting. Respectively, 04(3.63%) are engaged in Animal husbandry, 03(2.73%) in cultivation, 11(10%) respondents do other work like fishing, herding etc. Only 02(1.82%) respondents are enjoying government service of Class Fourth

### (ii).Housing Pattern

S.N.	House	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Hut	06	05.45
2.	Clay made cottage	21	19.09
3.	Tiled house	71	64.55
4.	Semi rcc slab	09	08.18
5.	Fully rcc slab	03	02.73
	Total	110	100%

This table provide the information about housing pattern of Agarias. There are 71(64.55%) families having proper tiled houses. 21(19.09%) respondents have traditional clay made cottage . Respectively, 09(8.18%) and 03(2.73%) respondents have enjoying with semi RCC Slab and fully RCC Slab houses. Only 06 (5.45%) respondents live in Huts.

### (iii). Dress pattern.

S.N.	Costumes	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Traditional Tribal costume	06	05.45
2.	Traditional rural costume	90	81.82
3.	Urban costume	11	10.00
4.	Modern urban costume	03	02.73
	Total	110	100%

In present study 90 (81.82%) respondents wear traditional rural costume like Dhoti Kurta, Pyjama-Kurta (male), Thick Sari, Kurta-Salwar (Female). 11(10.00%) respondents like to wear most popular costume i.e. Pant & Shirt. There are 03 (2.73%) respondents have charm to wear the modern urban costume like Jeans & Shirt. Only 06(5.45%) respondents found who like the wear own traditional tribal costume.

**(iv). Dietary Pattern**

S.N.	food	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Vegetarian food	11	10.00
2.	Non vegetarian food	91	82.73
3.	Fast food	08	07.27
	Total	110	100%

Research area is paddy dominant and hence the main crop is paddy. Agarias prefer rice. But also used wheat, vegetable, pulses etc. There are 91(82.73%) respondents who like to eat Non vegetarian food, 11(10%) respondents like to eat only vegetarian food. There 08(7.27%) respondents have been found who very much like to eat modern fast food.

**(V). Health care Pattern**

S.N.	Medicare	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Modern Medicare	64	58.18
2.	Indigenous Medicare	43	39.09
3.	Traditional Exorcism	03	02.73
	Total	110	100%

In present study researcher observed that 64(58.18%) respondent believed in modern Medicare facilities. Out total respondents 43(39.09%) are believed in Indigenous Medicare facilities. There are 03(2.73%) respondents are found, even today believed in traditional Exorcism.

**3. Socio-cultural pattern**

**(i). Marriage Pattern**

**(i-a)Age of marriage**

S.N.	Age of marriage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Under 18 year	13	11.82
2.	18-21 year	57	51.82
3.	21-24year	33	30.00
4.	After 24 year	07	06.36
	Total	110	100%

In present study researcher found that 57(51.82%) respondents had married 18-21 years age-group, 33(30.00%) in 21-24 years age-group, 07 (6.36%) are married after age of 24years.Only 13(11.82%) respondents are found who married under 18 year of the age.

**(i-b) forms of marriage**

S.N.	Marriage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Polyandry	00	00.00
2.	Sororal Poly gyny	03	02.73

3.	Non Sororal Polygyny	12	10.91
4.	monogamy	95	86.36
	Total	110	100%

As usual polyandry is not observed in Agarias, 95(86.36%) respondents are monogyny. Even now traditional polygyny observed in Agarias. There are respectively 12(10.91%) respondent are represent Non-Sororal polygyny, and 03(2.73%) are Sororal Polygyny.

**(ii). Family pattern**

**(ii-a) Form of family**

S.N.	Form of family	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Nucleus family	71	64.54
2.	Mixed family	37	33.64
3.	Expanded family	02	01.82
	Total	110	100%

In present study, researchers found that 71(64.54%) families were Nuclear family, 37(33.64%) families were mixed family. Only 02(1.82%) families are enjoying as an expended family.

**(ii-b) Size of family.**

S.N.	Size of family	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Only Respondent	01	00.90
2.	02 – 04 member	15	13.64
3.	05 – 07 member	57	51.82
4.	08 – 10 member	26	23.64
5.	11 < above	11	10.00
	Total	110	100%

Present study shows that out of 110 families, 57(51.82%) families have 05-07 member, 26 (23.64%) have 08-10 members, 15(13.64) have 02-04 family members, 11(10.00%) families have above 11 member. Only 01(0.90%) unmarried respondent is single.

**Result and Discussion:**

The observations reveals that majority sample respondents in the age group 31-40 year are at mature and more responsible age group to take responsibility for the family. 89.09% of respondents are enjoying married life. The household income of Agarias are unsatisfactory, researchers observed household earning of 69.09% respondents is less of Rs.5000 per month, Table No. 1 (iv) presents that 51.81% of sample respondents are illiterates and they are innocents, lack of having the knowledge they are unable to take proper benefit of developmental schemes, provided by state and central government. Under socio-economic pattern, most of the Agarian renunciation their traditional iron-smelting work and they are engaged in other occupation. Table No.2 (i) provide information on the employment of sample respondent in the study area is 50.09% are engaged as Agricultural & Non- Agricultural Labour followed by 22.73% respondent who engaged in their traditional occupation of iron-smelting. This table also shows that Agarias are too far to a government job. Table No.2 (ii)

shows housing pattern in study area. Majority of the families having tiled houses. Table No.2(iii) provides information about the dress pattern of Agaria. It shows that by interaction with other communities 81.82% respondents are wearing a costume like a rural Hindu family. Table No.2 (iv) Shows that Agaria is regular non-vegetarians and eat all kind meat like mutton, chicken and pork. There are 82.73% of respondents like to eat Non-vegetarian food. The Agarias are influenced by modern Medicare, But they still favour their traditional indigenous system. In Table No.2 (V) 58.18 %respondents favour in modern Medicare followed by 39.09% Indigenous Medicare lover. Under the socio-cultural pattern, Marriage pattern plays an important role in social life. Table No.3 (Ia) provide the information about the new trends of marriage age in Agarias. In present study researcher find 51.82% respondents belong to 18-21 years group of marriage, it shows now Agarias are leaving the custom of child marriage. Traditionally polygyny is permitted in Agaria but Table No.3 (ib) provide the information that 86.36%respondents are preferred monogyny marriage. This ratio presents the progressiveness of Agarias. Table No.3(ii)a justified that Agaria always enjoying with nuclear, in this table 64.54% of respondents settled as a nuclear family followed by 33.64 respondents of extended family. In the present scenario the standard size of family in Agaria given in Table No.3 (iib). There are 51.82 respondents liked 05-07 family members. The family has included mother father and grand with children.

### **Suggestion**

Socio-economic condition plays important role in the development of any society. The Agaria is one of the isolated tribe of India. The rays of development are far away from this community. They need help. The income of tribal people is very low, so they cannot fulfil their basic requirement. The Government has to enforce strictly their policies, development programme in tribal areas.

- Educational programmes with proper infrastructure to be implemented in the tribal area to improve their education standard.
- Tribal development programme for tribes to be prepared having regard to socio-economic spheres.
- Government come up with a plan to preserve the tribal culture.
- Employment opportunities should be created in tribal areas.
- Hospital with infrastructure and Specialist doctors are to be provided in tribal area

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