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INTERGENERATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION AMONG MUSLIM SCAVENGERS

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ABSTRACT

In contradistinction to Islamic tenets which prescribes equality, Muslims in India are regionally differentiated and socially hierarchized. Empirical studies conducted in different parts show that various caste-like groups with varying amount of honour and prestige exist among them. In fact, position of one of the lower caste, Muslim Bhangi (Muslim Scavenger) is not dissimilar from the Scheduled Castes. Traditionally, they pursued the occupation of removing and cleaning human refuse such as dirt, filth, human left out, human excreta from one generation to another. Earlier, opportunity to escape from these despised and abhorrent occupations was largely absent. But, with the onset of British rule new employment opportunities opened up. As these occupations had no caste affiliation, access to them was easy. Independence of the country and initiation of various development programs further added to such employment opportunities. Consequently, Muslim scavengers grabbed the new opportunities and entered into occupations which were caste- free .Occupation, usually, have economic as well as social dimensions. Thus, by entering into new occupations that are higher in occupational hierarchy individuals gain both economic as well as social mobility. The effect of this mobility was, also, reflected in the change of their interaction patterns. Those scavengers who were occupationally mobile were found to have been somewhat integrated with the general Muslim population. But, still, a lot of distance remains to be covered.

KEYWORDS: *Muslim Scavengers, occupational Mobility, Social Integration*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic great tradition prescribes equality and is antithetical to distinctions based on ascriptive criteria among its followers. The ideology of Islam does not sanction or justify distinctions based on caste, which determine rights and duties for each category. In fact, according to the preaching of Islam, every Muslim, irrespective of his rank and birth, is equal in the sight of God and there can be no distinction or discrimination among the Muslims except in regard to degrees of 'piety.' But, in contrast, some sorts of hierarchical ordering have been found to exist among Muslims in India. Empirical studies conducted by scholars (Ansari, 1960;Ahmed, 1973; Aggarwal, 1973;Guha,1965; Mines,1973; Misra,1964;Mondal, 1998; Siddiqui, 1973)in different parts of India as well as reports of government committees(Prime Minister High Level Committee, 2006; National Commission on Religious and Linguistic Minorities,2007) make it evident that Muslims in India do not constitute a monolith. They display some features that characterize caste as it exists amongst the Hindus. They are regionally differentiated and socially hierarchized. These hierarchical social groups are known as Baradari or Zat in popular usage. Muslims in India are divided into three broad groups, namely, Ashraf, Ajlaf and Arzal. Ashraf comprises Syed, Shaikh, Mughal and Pathan. These people either claim foreign origin or are converts from high castes among the Hindus. They occupy high social position. The second group described as Ajlaf is believed to have been converted from low castes among the Hindus and are traditionally associated with a particular ritually clean hereditary occupation. Weaver(Julaha),Tailor(Darji),Dyres(Rangrez), Glassworkers(Churisaz),Confectioners(Halwai), Bakers(Nanwai),kussab(Butcher)Dhuniya(cotta n-cleaners), vegetables-sellor (Kunjara) Water-Carriers(sukka),Distillers of liquor (Kulal), Inn-keepers(Bhatiyara) etc. constitute this group. The converts from erstwhile untouchables Hindu castes such as Dhobi (Washer man), Sweepers and Scavengers (Bhangi), Dom etc. form the third group known as Arzal (the list of caste is not exhaustive but illustrative of the fact that distinct groups enjoying differing status are found to exist among the Muslims). Muslims belonging to upper caste usually looked down upon the caste that is lower in hierarchy. Infact, some of the Muslim castes such as Washerman, Bhatiyara, and Bhangi are considered so low that their name itself evokes a sense of derision and are used as abuse. The position of Bhangi (also known as Mehtar, Halalkhor, Jamadar in daily parlance; who will henceforth be referred as Scavenger to avoid the derogatory meaning attached with these common usage) in particular is so low that Ansari(1960) has described them as Muslim Untouchables. Traditionally, they pursue the occupation of cleaning, removing, carrying night soil, human refuse and other menial tasks-tasks that are considered low, undignified and unclean. Mandlebaum (1987:550) says that they are commonly descendants from converts from low Hindu caste who retained their Jati (caste) name, occupation, poverty and disabilities.

Earlier Indian society was organized in such a manner that change in occupation was not easy. It was based on birth and members of a caste continue to practice their hereditary occupation from one generation to other. However, a considerable amount of change took place in Indian society during the British Rule both at ideological and structural level. In the realm of ideology it introduced notions such as rationality, individualism, equality, freedom and other scientific ideas. At structural level British rule had dissolving effect on the traditional occupational structure of the Indian society by opening up new avenues of employment and education to people of all castes. With a number of occupation arising out of industrialization, Railways and other means transportation, government bureaucracy and other institutions the opportunity to move away from ones' traditional occupation increased. As these occupations had no caste affiliation access to them was easy. Independence of the country gave further impetus to these modernizing forces. Various legislations were enacted to ensure that weaker sections are safeguarded adequately. Under these circumstances it was natural that those sections of society who are regarded as low would seek to improve their social position. A study of the existing literature makes it evident that there have been instances wherein a low Muslim caste has improved its social status either with the help of hypergamous marriages or by completely relinquishing its traditional occupation and adopting diverse occupations that are caste free (Ahmed 1973:177 ; Bhatty,1962 :211; Siddiqui, 1998:28)

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Keeping in view the above mentioned facts this paper intends to explore whether the Muslims scavengers have been occupationally mobile over a period of time, if their occupational mobility brought about change in their social status and finally whether they have been integrated in the larger Muslim society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data for the present study was collected from Gorakhpur city, U.P., in two phases. In the first phase, a list of various localities where Muslim scavengers reside was prepared using Snowball method. There were 28 such localities in all. Of these, Ahmad Nagar was finally chosen mainly for three reasons. Firstly, it is newly populated colony where people from different localities have come to reside. Secondly, its population is sizeable comprising about two hundred households. Thirdly, this being a new colony, people pursuing different occupations with various levels of income was found to reside. In the second phase, head of the every fourth household was requested to furnish information about three generations i.e. their fathers', their sons' and themself, in accordance with questions in the Schedule. Beside this, a specific kind of observation was maintained throughout the study to find out their interaction patterns and leisure activities. Some Muslims of the city were also interviewed to obtain in depth information regarding the population under study.

This paper has been divided into two sections. Section first deals with occupational mobility and section second deals with the issues of social integration.

SECTION – I

There are two approaches to describe occupational mobility. One method is to rank occupations in hierarchy of prestige, by selecting a sample of respondents (prestige judges) from the community. Such ranked occupations are grouped into various prestige categories forming a base to interpret the mobility tables. The second method is by taking the caste's occupation as base, and from that, one explains the varied dimensions of occupational mobility by revealing the deviations from the caste occupation. In this study the later approach has been followed mainly for one reason. Since the scavengers' traditional occupation constitute the bottom and looked down upon, movement to other positions from that of their traditional occupation of scavenging have been considered as upward occupational mobility. In order to find out shift in occupation over a period of time inter- generational mobility has been taken in to account. Inter-generational mobility refers to changes in social status between different generations.Whereas intra-generational mobility refers to change in social position that occurs during a person's lifetime. Intergenerational social mobility concerns the changes of social position from one generation to the next generations of family members. Intra-generational social mobility, on the other hand,concerns the ability of a specific individual to move up or down the ladder within his or her lifetime.

Table 1 Occupational Background of Respondents' Father (First Generation)

Occupational status	No. of Respondents' father	%age	Nature of occupation	No. of Respondents' father	%age
Employed	49	98	Traditional	34	68
			Business	1	2
Unemployed	1	2	Skilled	7	14
			Service (other than tradition)	6	12
			Farmer	1	2
Total	50	100		49	98

Source: Primary field Work

From the table it is evident that 98% of the first generation was employed and only 2% unemployed. Of the 98% employed members, 68% were engaged in traditional occupation of cleaning, sweeping and scavenging, and 30% in non-traditional occupations. This 30% non-traditional occupation comprised 2% business, 14% skilled, 12% services (other than traditional) and 2% farmers. 12% services (other than traditional) included teacher, compounder and ban-set owners. Therefore,

from the data it is evident that though majority of the first generation member were engaged in their hereditary occupation, substantial proportion of them had shifted to non-traditional occupation, that by general consent were accorded higher prestige. On the basis of this result, it can, also, be concluded that there has been intra-generational upward social mobility, as fathers' of respondent constitute one generation.

Table 2 Occupational Background of Respondents (Second Generation)

Occupational status	No. of Respondents	%age	Nature of occupation	No. of Respondents	%age
Employed	42	84	Traditional occupation	20	40
			Business	4	8
Unemployed	8	16	Skilled	7	14
			Wage-earners	3	6
			Pensioners	5	10
			Services (except traditional)	3	6
Total	50	100		42	84

Source: Primary field Work

Table 2 shows that 84% of the respondents were gainfully employed and rest were unemployed. Of the 84% employed, 40% were engaged in traditional occupation and the rest of the respondents in non-traditional occupations. The study sample exhibits that, out of 44% respondents engaged in non-traditional occupation, 14% were engaged in skilled occupation, 4% in business, 6% wage earners, 10% pensioners and 6% other clean jobs. 6% other clean jobs consisted of Teacher, compounder and contractors. Thus, it can be concluded that in the second generation too, there has been intra- generational upward social mobility.

Table 3 Occupational Background of Respondents' Sons (Third Generation)

Occupational status	No. of Respondents' Son	%age	Nature of occupation	No. of Respondents' Son	%age
Employed	8	40	Traditional occupation	2	10
Student	4	20	Skilled worker	4	20
Unemployed	8	40	Service (other than traditional)	2	10
Total	20	100		8	40

Source: Primary field Work

Note: In the preparation of this table only the elder son of the respondents above 18 years of age have been taken into account. Since there was wide gap between respondents' age, theirs' sons' age also differed widely. Apart from it, some of the respondents had no sons. As a result of it, there were only twenty sons above fifteen; whereas the number of respondents is 50.

Data in the table 3 clearly indicate that 40% of the third generation member was unemployed and 40% employed. A part form it, it is also obvious that 20% of third generation member were engaged in the pursuit of acquiring education. Of the 40% employed 10% were engaged in traditional occupation, 20% in skilled occupation, and 10% in services (other than traditional).   Thus from these findings it is clear that in this generation too, there has been intra-generational upward social mobility.

A careful and close analysis of the data brings out two important, distinct but interrelated phenomena to the fore.   A comparison of Table 1, 2 and 3 show that in successive generations the rate of employment and its nature has witnessed a change. Our data show that employment rate in each successive generation marks a dip as   98% of first generation, 84% second generation and only 40% third generation were gainfully employed. Thus, it can be said that over a period time unemployment among Muslim scavenger has grown. The reasons attributed to this growth of unemployment can be put as under:

(i)   With rise in education, awareness and low prestige and stigmatized nature of their hereditary occupation, members have increasingly tended to give up their traditional occupation. Instead of it, they prefer to enter into clean and better valued occupations. But their educational level and its quality are such that they are unable to compete with the general populations. Non-recognition as scheduled caste by both the central as well state governments further compounds their problem. Their recognition as one of the Other Backward Class (OBC) by the government is of not much help, for it consists of castes that are socially, educationally, and economically far more superior to them.

(ii)   Paucity of adequate funds and inexperience reduces their chance of selfemployment.Althoughunemployme nt among them has increased, but it is

also evident from the above mentioned data that their participation in non-traditional occupations marks a growth as their representation in non-traditional occupations was 30%, 44% and 30% respectively. There is all likelihood that the representation of third generation in non-traditional occupation will increase substantially, as majority of them are at present, involved in their educational pursuit. Some of them, who are educated but unemployed, are seeking clean occupations. Their parents are, also, not allowing them to take up traditional occupation.

On the basis of the foregoing discussions it is clear that the scavenging community, which has been performing degraded work of removing, sweeping, cleaning night-soil, human refuse and other menial tasks, has given it up substantially at both intra and inter-generational level. It can be concluded that over a period of time Muslims scavengers of Gorakhpur city have attained upward occupationalmobility.The occupations generally have economic as well as social dimensions and thus by entering into occupation that is higher in occupational hierarchy individual gains economic as well as social mobility at the same time. Therefore, it can be said that the Muslim scavengers have been socially mobile over a period of time.

Section – Two

The previous section proved that Muslim scavengers have made substantial upward occupational mobility over a period of time. Now what is the impact of such mobility on their interaction patterns? In this section the main purpose is to explore whether the scavengers are integrated into the larger Muslim society of the town of Gorakhpur. A number of approaches have been adopted by different scholars to study the process of social integration. It is advisable here to discuss in brief some of these approaches for a better understanding of the problem before presenting objectives and assumptions.

Durkheim (1947) has been one among the prominent sociologists to have given adequate emphasis to the study of social integration. He discusses it in terms of group solidarity. His discussion of integration is expressed in terms of mechanical and organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity is the integration of parts through common values and beliefs. Organic solidarity, on the other hand, is integration through dependence. He, also, emphasized that sanctions such as the repressive and restitutive are essential for maintaining social integration.

Some sociologists have tried to approach the question of integration from the point view of individuals. It would be useful to mention the views of Blau (1960).He opines that integration is subjective individual process that involves attitudinal changes such as removal of fears, hatreds, suspicions, and stereotypes. Integration involves problem of personal choice, personal readiness and personal stability. Its achievement requires a longer period of time. It cannot come about overnight. It requires education and deals with the problems of changing men's heart and minds. He, also, emphasizes the individual's ability to make himself approachable and there by getting integrated into the group.

However, one of the important considerations in empirical study is operationalization of concept. It is in this contextthat D'Souza's (1977) conceptualization of integration and its operationalization becomes important. The major indicators of social integration, given by him, are neighbourhood pattern, ethnic segregation, inter-communication, and friendship pattern and participation of cultural groups in the institutional structures like educational institution,economic organization, and religious activities.In this study D'Souza's approach has been adopted since it is easily amenable to operationalization. This section of the present study intends to explore whether upward occupational mobility of scavengers have facilitated their social integration with the larger society of the town. This has been analysed in terms of neighborhood pattern, pattern of participation in social interaction and participation in organizational activities.

Muslim scavengers, like their other counterparts, have been living in segregated residential area in rural India for centuries and this cultural perpetuation has been replicated in urban neighbourhood patterns as well as. After independence several measures taken by the government to integrate these sections of Indian population in main stream is expected to reduce the social separation between various groups. It is the expectation in this study that the occupational mobility of scavenger would have positive bearing on their integration in the neighbourhood pattern. The proximity of the scavengers with other castes in their residential and neighbourhood areas will would be characterized as an indicator of social integration where barriers of castes would not stand in the way of their living in common locality and residing as neighbors'. On the other hand a lack of proximity of the scavengers with other caste groups in their residential area,

neighbourhood pattern would be characterized as contrary to social integration. The assumption here, is that with occupational mobility the residential pattern of scavenger will change.

In the city of Gorakhpur Muslim scavenger reside in 28 (twenty eight) residential areas. These localities are dispersed in the different part of the city. In all the localities their neighbourhood comprised of their own caste members. None of them had shifted his residence to a locality which where members of different caste lived together. They form an exclusive residential area for themselves. It seems that earlier they lived in segregated area outside, but with the expansion of the city their exclusive residential area has been surrounded by new beautiful residential colonies.

Ahmad Nagar where the present study was conducted is a new residential area. Its population is growing rapidly and is exclusively inhabited by Muslim scavengers. Not a single instance of other caste group member could be located who lived in this colony. Some of the lower caste Hindu especially Harijan and Khatik lived in close proximity to Ahmed Nagar. The foregoing discussion clearly indicates that even after substantial upward occupational mobility Scavengers residential pattern has not changed. The assumption that with occupational mobility residential pattern of scavenger will change stands negated. In the beginning of the paper it was shown that earlier Muslim scavengers were discriminated against not only by the Hindus, but by their Muslim brethren too. Ansari (1960) says that member of higher caste maintained social distance from them. They did not, ordinarily, served them food in the utensils which they themselves used for dining. They were not even, treated fairly in mosques. They were asked to stand separately in the last row. In view these, here an attempt has been made to explore whether with rise in occupational mobility change in their interaction pattern, also takes place? This formulation has been analysed in terms of their marriage pattern, commensality relations and religious participation.

Muslim scavengers of the city preferred to marry among themselves. Not a single case of exogamous marriage could be found. A cross-section of Muslim population of the city told that they were not averse to marrying a Muslim scavenger provided they had given up their traditional occupation for at least a generation and were educated and well-off. But in reality, as it was noticed during the course of interview in the heart of hearts they were not treated as equal. People did not want to enter into matrimonial relation with them.

In contrast to early period, most of them who had shifted to some clean occupations frequently visited the house of Muslims of higher castes, and shared food with them. Muslim of higher castes also visited them. However it needs to be mentioned that persons belonging to the higher castes do not usually visits at the home of those who persisted with their traditional occupations. Muslim of higher castes served them food in utensil which they used for themselves. They did not use different utensils for them. Although the scavengers spend most of their time among themselves, they, especially those, who are highly mobile, had friends from every section of the Muslim population. During course of interaction with them as well as a cross-section of people it was evident that, Hindus, except Scheduled Castes and other lowly placed groups, maintained enormous social distance with those who persisted with their traditional occupation. This social distance was relatively low in case of those who had shifted to some clean occupations.

It is interesting to note that now a days they do not have any problem offering prayer in mosque. No discriminations of any sort is normally maintained in the mosques. It is to be noted that in a mosque, located in Asuran locality, the Imam (the person who lead the prayer) was a Muslim scavenger. All Muslims of the area offered Namaz under his leadership. When asked they said that he is Hafiz-e-Quran(a person who has memorized the entire holy book-Quran) knowledgeable, neat and clean, and nothing to do with their "traditional occupation". Therefore, there is no problem in accepting his leadership. Here, too, it is obvious that if a Muslim scavenger is neat and clean, and given up his traditional occupation, no Muslims maintain distance from them. Therefore, from the foregoing discussion, it emerges that with occupational mobility social integration of Muslim scavenger with wider society has increased.

Apart from neighbourhood and interaction patterns, membership to different organization and participation in its activities, also, have an impact on the orientation of individuals. In the city under consideration it was found that over a period of time their caste Panchayat which played important role in decision making and solving various kinds of feuds and problems in the past has been replaced by other formal authorities. At the work place, every day, they participate like workers and even in their interaction it is the routine issues affecting the workers that are shared and discussed in course of mutual interaction, either inside the premise or outside. Hence, in the life and experience of workers in

the town, issues such as wages, bonus, and security of job, promotions, pensions, housing facilities, provident fund and questions of similar nature are of direct relevance. Such experiences have largely diminished the importance of caste, other particularistic and other such loyalties in shaping their attitude and values. It is to be noted here that those persisted with traditional occupation were found in different situation. Majority of them interacted with the scavenging community and their awareness level was quite low in comparison to those who had shifted to other occupations. A part from these, the only kind of organization which was relevant for them was their caste association and the trade unions. Both claim enormous following but with a difference. The former composed of Muslim scavenger only, while later consisted of workers of different caste groups that hold meeting for the workers and conduct other trade union activities to keep them aware. It always works for the furtherance of their interest. At the helm of affairs of this organization were those who were educated, occupationally mobile and possessed good amount of social prestige in and outside the community.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis, therefore, tends to suggest that those who are occupationally mobile are more integrated with general population. It can be said that with occupational mobility scavengers' nature of interaction with the wider society has also witnessed qualitative change. But, it needs to be pointed out that some distance remains to be covered before they are well integrated with the general population.

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