

## Social Mobility Among Muslims: A Study of Aligarh City\*

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**Abstract:** Social mobility studies examine the extent to which a society's member social position varies over the course of their lives or between generations. The purposive snowball sampling method has been used to collect the data from three generations of the same household. The study is to capture the intergenerational mobility among Muslims in Aligarh city and concludes that over the generation people of Aligarh city have assigned higher importance to education because of well developed education institution in the city and as a consequence people have opted for more remunerative and respected occupations with higher income.

**Keywords:** Stratification, Social Mobility, Muslims, Industrialization, westernization

### I. Introduction

Social mobility studies examine the extent to which a society's member social position varies over the course of their lives or between generations. It explores the causes of social inequality's reproduction over generations. People stratification in a democratic society can only be justified on the basis of meritocracy. However, actual researches demonstrate that people of disadvantaged groups struggle to advance in society. As a result of disparities in school funding, overt and covert discrimination, labelling, and class consciousness, as well as the opportunities money can buy and the obstacles poverty causes, upward mobility for the disadvantaged is an exception (O' Leary, 2007). Social mobility also examines the impact of numerous factors that encourage or obstruct the social mobility process. The concept of social mobility is concerned with the socio-economic position of a person or a community belonging to various portions of a society. Social mobility is critical for social transformation and the general advancement of any nation.

Pitrim Sorokin's groundbreaking study on social mobility, published in 1927, marks the start of social mobility. He defined social mobility as any shift of an individual or social object or values, anything created or transformed by human action, from one social position to another (Sorokin, 1927). He interpreted this to mean anything that has been made or modified by human activity. The progression from one social status to another was the next thing that Sorokin contemplated after that. It is still a recurring idea that may be found woven throughout the concept of mobility that was established later.

Social mobility is the process by which individuals move from one position to another in a social position that has, by popular accord, been given defined hierarchical values (Seymour M. Lipset; Reinhard Bendix, 1951). Research on social mobility examines the process by which individuals might shift from one position in society, where they held a particular rank, to another position that is either higher or lower in the social hierarchy. Therefore, the concept of social mobility encompasses any change in social status or position that is made by individuals who originate from a variety of different social backgrounds, and the assumption of some kind of hierarchy is present in every study that investigates social mobility.

In the academic literature, there are different ways to move up or down in society. In sociology, social mobility is defined as moving between social classes or occupational groups. In economics, on the other hand, the focus is usually on income and how it changes over time. At least at one point in time, income is a direct

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measure of how much control a person has over resources. However, social class may be a better indicator of how well a person will do in life. Social mobility can be looked at both between generations (how much children's opportunities depend on the social class or income of their parents) and within generations (how much a person's social class or income changes over the course of their own life). Sociologists usually look at how people move from one generation to the next, while economists look at how people move within their own generation. Sociologists also distinguish between absolute and relative social mobility. Absolute social mobility is the number or percentage of people from one social class who move into another social group. Relative social mobility is the degree to which people from different social classes have different chances of moving into a certain social class.

## **II. Social Mobility Among Muslims of India**

There are over a hundred different religions and ethnic groups in India, making it a very diverse country. Although there are other religious minorities in India, Hindus and Muslims make up the majority of the population. These two groups have been closely linked for thousands of years, but their socio-cultural traits and theological doctrines are vastly dissimilar. Large and diversified, the Indian Muslim community encompasses both social and religious diversity as well as a wide range of socioeconomic status. An estimated 14.2% of Indians identify as Muslims, according to the most recent data available from the 2021 Census of India. They are the second-largest religious and ethnic group in India. After Indonesia and Pakistan, the two countries with the greatest Muslim populations, the Indian Muslim community is the third largest in the world. Only Jammu and Kashmir remained in India, which was partitioned and handed over to Pakistan, which had a Muslim-majority population before the country's independence. As long as we exclude Jammu and Kashmir and Lakshwadeep, India has Muslims in virtually every village, town, and city that makes up the country. As a result, Muslims can be found in every corner of the country.

After the Sachar Committee Report came out, there have been a number of studies that use the data to look at the social, economic, and educational situations of Muslims in India. Many researchers, policymakers, and ordinary Muslims think that education is the only way for them to improve their social and economic status and get better-paying jobs. At the same time, there are worries about getting into schools and not being treated fairly in the formal job market. The most significant challenges that stand in the way of the educational and socioeconomic development of the community are poverty and a shortage of true financial resources. Muslims are the most oppressed minority of all the communities that are considered to be minority groups (Shariff, 1998). As pointed out earlier, the Sachar committee made a concerted effort to document the backwardness of those involved. According to the committee's findings, the Muslim population has the worst nutritional status, the highest rate of underweight children, the lowest education level, and the highest rate of maternal mortality. It is believed that the community has come to terms with the fact that they will always be poor and unequal as a result of the mindset they have established.

The Constitution of India guarantees that all people of India have the right to be treated equally in terms of opportunities. It ensures that there will be no discrimination in the country on the basis of an individual's religion, region, class, or caste in any capacity whatsoever. However, there is actual proof that there is widespread prejudice in India based on the caste, class, and religion of individuals. This discrimination is pervasive. It is generally agreed that Dalits and other minorities were the ones to suffer the most as a result of this historical oppression. In India, Muslims make up a small percentage of the population, and their socioeconomic status is dismal; in certain cases, it is even worse than that of India's scheduled castes and tribes (*Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India – A Report*, 2006).

The backwardness of Muslims in terms of education and occupation can be attributed to a number of different factors, such as differences in endowments between different social groups, actual or perceived discrimination, patterns of behaviour or attitudes, and the availability of educational and employment opportunities, amongst other things. Female pupils were more likely to suffer from the negative effects of a

feeling of insecurity and limited access to schools of a high level. Madrasas, rather than schools, are preferred by Muslims because of their beliefs regarding discrimination and the "communalization" of reading materials. Muslims also have a diminished appreciation for the benefits that can be gained by education (Basant, 2012).

### III. Review of Literature

Studies on social mobility, in particular, came to the fore after the post-independence period. These studies prompted both Indian and foreign researchers to conduct an assessment of caste mobility in Indian society's social structure. Cohen, Bailey, Beteille, Hardgrave, and others oversaw such experiments. The existing literatures on social mobility may or may not deal with mobility in a single variable, but they may deal with mobility in multiple variables. Cohn, Bailey, and Andre Beteille conducted studies that examined social mobility in a broader sense. Numerous sociologists, including Andre Beteille, Anil Bhatt, Lynch, Sachchidanad, Nirupma Prakash, M.N Srinivas, A.T. Uplankar, G.D. Berreman, B.J Dev, and Lahiri, conducted studies employing various factors to evaluate distinct mobility patterns (Suman, 2002).

Even though a significant number of Dalit families have benefited from the development programmes, they continue to live as a distinct group because of the differences in their socioeconomic standing. Their integration into mainstream society and the general public's acceptance of them both have a long way to go (Chetty, 1991; Rao, 1994). These kinds of conclusions have also been revealed by a number of other researches dealing with social mobility. (Bhatt, 1975; Khan, 1980; Malik, 1979; Sinha, 1959) and others.

Other variables such as educational success, industrial growth, urbanisation, and the process of Sanskritization have all contributed to social mobility to a significant degree. (Alexander, 1968; Epstein, 1962; Sharma, 1996). Families dwelling in Rajasthan have been benefited from the Sanskritization and modernising processes, although there has been little movement at the commercial level (Sharma, 1996).

A thorough analysis of population trends in India and Pakistan shows that as the population, urbanisation, and access to a secular education have grown, so has India's social mobility. As compared to the past, the new suggested economic developments and the democratic style of government, in which no clear entitlements have been assigned to only a single caste or creed, have a significant impact on social mobility (Davis, 1951).

An empirical study was conducted on 100 households in Aligarh in order to determine the degree of the structural changes that Muslim families in Aligarh had encountered up to this point. Using stratified random sampling, the purpose of this pilot survey was to investigate a number of significant elements of Muslim families from urban areas that belonged to lower and middle socioeconomic classes. According to the findings of the study, the model of the traditional Muslim family that prevails in Aligarh is that of an extended family. The traditional configuration of a Muslim family has shrunk from a large number of members to a smaller number of members, primarily as a result of economic and political pressure, as well as westernisation. In order to shed some light on the social nature of the Muslim society, the study presented both traditional and contemporary aspects of Muslim life in Aligarh (Basharatullah Khan, 1973).

A study conducted on Muslim society in Aligarh concluded that the community has consistently upheld the boundaries that are set by religions other than Islam. More weight is placed on these identities on a day-to-day basis by a Muslim than is placed on a high Islamic tradition. Taking into account the socioeconomic situation of Muslims, the study provides an explanation of the relationship between the fragmented ideas of identity and social structure and work. Due to factors including a lack of education and financial stability, the majority of Muslims are employed in low-scale businesses, while only a minority are in positions to function as business owners. The Islamic beliefs are not such that they inhibit the expansion of the economy (Mann, 1992).

Several new initiatives aimed at promoting the growth of the Muslim community have been launched. Activists and researchers have often urged the government to take positive action in behalf of Muslims. Success of these programmes, on the other hand, is totally dependent on the community's refusal to be subject to societal biases and prejudices. Disparity can be addressed by addressing the eradication of longstanding "historical discrimination" and "inadvantage" that has been imposed by the laws of the land for centuries. "Equalization of life chances" in the economic sector must be implemented as well (Beteille, 2002).

There hasn't been nearly enough research done on the subject of Muslims ability to climb the social ladder in India. There have been a limited number of studies conducted so far on the socio-economic state of the Muslim population. The social mobility among Muslims living in India is a topic about which very little is known to the general public. As a result of this, effort has been made to conduct a comprehensive research of the nature of social mobility, the variables that contribute to social mobility and the implications of social mobility among Muslims in the city of Aligarh.

#### **IV. Research Methodology and Data**

Data and information are crucial elements of any study. Systematic data should be collected to assess and make conclusions regarding particular linkages between distinct variables. The information gathered will aid in drawing some conclusions regarding the factors in question. As a result, data gathering is necessary for analysing and evaluating the correlations between variables, as well as forming assumptions about specific things when necessary. Data collection in statistics is the process of obtaining information from all relevant sources in order to solve a research topic. It aids in the evaluation of the problem's outcome. A person can deduce a response to the relevant inquiry using the data collection methods. To develop assumptions regarding future probability and trends, most of the researchers use data collection methods. After the data has been acquired, the data organisation procedure must be completed.

There are various methods of data collection Based on the objectives of the study. The present study relies on primary data wherein the data and information have been gathered using questionnaire. Initially, a pilot survey has been conducted in the selected wards of the city and analysed the gathered information. A pilot survey is a smaller version of a full survey in which the researcher sends out a questionnaire to a smaller group of people than the actual target population. You can predict participant response patterns and make any necessary changes to your research by gathering data from a convenience sample.

The purposive snowball sampling method has been used to collect the data from three generations of the same household. It is to capture the intergenerational mobility among Muslims in Aligarh. Based available resources and time constrains we have selected 460 respondents from 20 wards of Aligarh city. The data on various socio-economic indicators have been collected and used and analysed at various places in the thesis. Furthermore, the study uses only descriptive statistics and graphical methods to demonstrate and explain the social mobility which encompasses only educational, income and caste mobility in this study.

#### **V. Results and Discussion**

The level of income from Ist generation to IIIrd generation shows interesting movements in different wards of Aligarh city. Shah Jamal is considered as one of the least developed areas of Aligarh where 83 percent of the generation I used to earn less than 15,000 per month (Table 1). This percentage, although, declined to 57 percent in IIIrd generation but still very high among all wards considered in the study. During the interactions with people in this area, it has been observed that people have been living at margin. On the other hand, there was no one who has been earning above Rs. 90,000 per month. The similar trends could be observed in Nai Basti, Bhujpura and Sarai Nawab. One can notice that Badar Bagh, University area, Dodhpur and Zohra Bagh are closely associated with the University and consequently have less number of people with income lower than Rs. 15,000 per month and more of Rs. 90,000 per month in first generation as well as IIIrd generation. Income mobility is highest in Jeewangarh and Zohra Bagh (Table 1). Dodhpur, Zohra Bagh and Badar Bagh have highest percentage of population having Rs. 90,000 per month.

The income mobility can be witnessed in almost all the 20 wards of Aligarh City. The majority of population (ie., 66%) under study in Ist generation was earning less than and equal to Rs. 15,000 per month which declined to 27% in IIIrd generation. It is also interesting to notice that highest jump has been seen in the range of 15-30 thousand income per month. In this range of monthly income has increased to 41 percent in IIIrd generation from 15 percent in Ist generation. It indicates the upward intergenerational income mobility among Muslims in Aligarh city.

Table 1 represents intergenerational income mobility in all wards individually. Usman Para is the ward located in the main city. It is mainly Muslim majority area. As can be noticed that the percentage of population earning less than Rs. 15000 per month was 70 percent during Grandfather times that declined to 50% during father tenure and further shrunk to 30 % while income at low range (15 to 30) and medium range has improved considerably. One of the interesting areas of Aligarh city is Rasalganj where the growth at low range income level has been significant whereas growth is backward in income level above Rs. 90,000 per month. Similar trend in income mobility can also be witnessed in the University area.

## **VI. Education as a Determinant of Social Mobility**

Education has long been thought to be a driver for upward social mobility. Sociological research has proven the role of education in predicting upward mobility. Affirmative action initiatives in public sector jobs and education have a long history in India. SC, ST, and OBCs are socially and educationally deprived populations, and these reservation measures are aimed at them. Despite the existence of these rules, several studies have demonstrated that characteristics such as caste, gender, and social status have an impact on educational chances. In other words, while the impact of education in determining social mobility, other characteristics such as class, caste, and gender also influence access to education.

Intergenerational education mobility can be assessed with data presented in Table 2. We have categorized education into three different types. The respondents from first generation has high number with small education. The 307 respondents out of 460 sample have reported high school or less education which has declined to 229 in case of father and shrunk further to 165 in case of third generation. It shows an upward educational mobility at city level. One can also dive deep at ward level for a deeper analysis. More than 80 percent backward areas reports low education level. The Areas like Nai Basti, Bhujpura, Lekhraj Nagar, Jeewangarh, Rasalganj and Bhamola has more than 80 percentage population with low education. On the other hand, areas like Badar Bagh, Zohra Bagh, Firdous Nagar and University Area has lower percentage of population with high school degree.

An upward educational mobility could be seen across all areas. The more developed areas of Aligarh city have witnessed exponential growth in the population with higher degrees. There are some areas of the city having strong business roots. Majority of the population are involved in business. In these areas they only prefer intermediate and a bachelor degree as their only objective is to join the family business rather than seeking for any job. These families are found in Dodhpur, Rasalganj and Usman Para.

Table 2 gives a detail account of ward-wise intergenerational education mobility. The Usman Para ward shows deceleration in population with high school education from 77% in Ist generation to 43% in IIIrd generation. On the other hand, population with master and above has also improved from 10% to 23% showing an upward trend. The population of Zohra Bagh, Badar Bagh and University area has more high education level. These locations have more post-graduate and doctorate degree holders.

**Table 1: Intergenerational Income Mobility in Aligarh city**

Ward Name	Total	Ist Generation					IInd Generation					IIIrd Generation				
		< 15	15-30	31-50	51-90	> 90	< 15	15-30	31-50	51-90	> 90	< 15	15-30	31-50	51-90	> 90
Usman Para	30	70%	13%	7%	7%	3%	50%	23%	13%	7%	7%	30%	50%	10%	7%	3%
Sarai Bala	15	73%	13%	7%	7%	0%	47%	27%	20%	7%	0%	27%	33%	13%	20%	7%
Shah Jamal	30	83%	10%	3%	3%	0%	63%	17%	10%	7%	3%	53%	33%	7%	3%	3%
Sarai Kaba	15	67%	13%	13%	7%	0%	47%	27%	13%	7%	7%	20%	47%	20%	7%	7%
Nai Basti	30	80%	10%	7%	3%	0%	57%	27%	13%	3%	0%	20%	57%	10%	7%	7%
Bhujpura	15	73%	13%	7%	0%	7%	53%	20%	13%	7%	7%	60%	20%	13%	7%	0%
Kala Mahal	15	60%	13%	20%	7%	0%	53%	27%	13%	0%	7%	33%	40%	13%	7%	7%
Jamalpur	30	70%	10%	3%	7%	10%	40%	27%	10%	7%	17%	13%	37%	20%	17%	13%
Firdaus Nagar	30	73%	3%	17%	7%	0%	43%	23%	10%	10%	13%	17%	37%	13%	23%	10%
Hamdard Nagar	30	63%	17%	7%	10%	3%	47%	30%	10%	7%	7%	30%	50%	10%	3%	7%
Sarai Nawab	15	80%	13%	7%	0%	0%	67%	13%	13%	0%	7%	40%	33%	13%	7%	7%
Badam Nagar	30	67%	13%	7%	10%	3%	50%	27%	13%	3%	7%	33%	50%	10%	0%	7%
Zohra Bagh	30	60%	13%	10%	7%	10%	40%	27%	10%	10%	13%	23%	33%	17%	7%	20%
Lekhraj Nagar	10	60%	20%	10%	0%	10%	50%	30%	20%	0%	0%	20%	40%	20%	10%	10%
Jeewangarh	15	67%	20%	13%	0%	0%	40%	33%	13%	0%	13%	27%	40%	13%	7%	13%
Dodhpur	30	60%	27%	10%	0%	3%	43%	30%	13%	7%	7%	17%	40%	10%	17%	17%
Rasalganj	20	65%	15%	10%	5%	5%	20%	50%	15%	10%	5%	15%	60%	20%	5%	0%
Badar Bagh	20	40%	25%	5%	25%	5%	20%	35%	20%	20%	5%	25%	35%	25%	0%	15%
Bhamola	20	55%	35%	5%	5%	0%	50%	25%	15%	5%	5%	20%	45%	20%	5%	10%
University Area	30	60%	7%	3%	10%	20%	17%	23%	20%	10%	30%	7%	40%	47%	0%	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>9%</b>

**Source:** Compiled based on primary survey.

**Note:** Each generation has been classified into different income interval starting from less than Rs. 15 thousand per month to above Rs. 90 thousand.



**Table 2:** Intergenerational Educational Mobility Among Muslims in Aligarh city

Ward Name	Total	Education								
		Ist Generation			IInd Generation			IIIrd Generation		
		10th and less	12th and Graduation	Master and Doctorate	10th and less	12th and Graduation	Master and Doctorate	10th and less	12th and Graduation	Master and Doctorate
Usman Para	30	77%	13%	10%	60%	27%	13%	43%	33%	23%
Sarai Bala	15	73%	20%	7%	47%	40%	13%	33%	47%	20%
Shah Jamal	30	73%	17%	10%	63%	20%	17%	57%	23%	20%
Sarai Kaba	15	80%	13%	7%	67%	20%	13%	53%	33%	13%
Nai Basti	30	90%	7%	3%	77%	13%	10%	60%	20%	20%
Bhujpura	15	80%	13%	7%	73%	13%	13%	53%	27%	20%
Kala Mahal	15	73%	20%	7%	60%	20%	20%	53%	27%	20%
Jamalpur	30	60%	23%	17%	43%	37%	20%	23%	63%	13%
Firdaus Nagar	30	50%	27%	23%	23%	40%	37%	13%	47%	40%
Hamdard Nagar	30	57%	23%	20%	40%	37%	23%	33%	40%	27%
Sarai Nawab	15	60%	27%	13%	53%	33%	13%	40%	33%	27%
Badam Nagar	30	87%	10%	3%	67%	23%	10%	43%	37%	20%
Zohra Bagh	30	40%	37%	23%	33%	43%	23%	10%	47%	43%
Lekhraj Nagar	10	90%	10%	0%	60%	20%	20%	40%	30%	30%
Jeewangarh	15	80%	13%	7%	60%	20%	20%	40%	27%	33%
Dodhpur	30	57%	23%	20%	37%	43%	20%	43%	43%	13%
Rasalganj	20	80%	10%	10%	65%	20%	15%	40%	35%	25%
Badar Bagh	20	45%	40%	15%	25%	45%	30%	10%	55%	35%
Bhamola	20	80%	10%	10%	60%	35%	5%	45%	35%	20%
University Area	30	43%	33%	23%	20%	57%	23%	10%	63%	27%
<b>Total</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>25%</b>

Source: Compiled based on primary survey

## VII. Conclusions and Policy Implications

Current estimates of India's social mobility imply that intergenerational persistence in both income and professions persists: few children from low-income homes will likely grow up to earn incomes at the top of the distribution. Similarly, few children from low-income families will pursue professional or high-skilled careers. The ramifications are far-reaching, since it implies that India is unable to harness the population's strengths and capabilities. But for social mobility, the Indian setting poses distinct problems.

The present study combines intergenerational income, educational to study the social mobility among Muslims in Aligarh city. The concept of social mobility is a very wide term, but we stick to these two. Aligarh city has been famous for Aligarh Muslim University and it has widespread impacts on the socio-economic and educational characteristics of Muslim Population of the region. The study is based on field survey that has utilized structured questionnaire. Based on available resources and time constraints the study has accommodated 460 samples.

The existing literature on social mobility shows downward social mobility among Muslims and it becomes more severe if it is compared with non-Muslim population. An upward trend could be seen in income and educational mobility, but caste mobility has exacerbated further over the period of time both in Hindus and Muslims. The Varna system legitimizes the very existence of caste-hierarchy among Hindus and Muslims in Indian subcontinent. The caste rigidities are the results of these interlinked connections. The present study concludes upward social mobility in both income and education at ward-level in Aligarh city. Over the generation people of Aligarh city have assigned higher importance to education because of well developed education institution in the city and as a consequence people have opted for more remunerative and respected occupations with higher income.

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