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I. INTRODUCTION

Occupational mobility among Dhobis signifies the rise of scheduled castes which relates to the larger issue of social change in Indian caste system. Spread of education, reservation policies in jobs and educational institutions and policies of government have led to the emergence of middle class in the society. At present, educational and occupational mobility led to upward mobility in respect of intragenerational and intergenerational mobility, specially originating in the industrialisation and urbanisation of the society which brings educational and occupational opportunities and

economic and political changes. Dhobis in Assam are witnessing social change which is not uniformly patterned throughout the state. It is observed even among different groups of Dhobis. Urbanization, industrialization, modernization, globalization and other forces bring changes like new occupations, disintegration of large family, decline of traditional values, taboos and customs among them. Traditional culture and original way of living of Dhobis is changing gradually. They are experiencing the modernity, fast change in their life. Traditional occupation is also on decline. They are now working as doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers, leaders and administrators at different levels. However, most of Dhobis are still engage in the low paid

OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY AND CHANGE IN FAMILY PATTERNS AMONG DHOBIS OF DULIAJAN AND DIBRUGARH TOWNS OF UPPER ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

The Dhobis in Assam is passing through gradual institutional change specially family patterns due to occupational mobility since independence. Therefore, this paper reviews the changes with occupational mobility that has taken place in the family patterns among Dhobis of Duliajan and Dibrugarh towns of upper Assam. The data were collected on 25th Oct to 3rd Dec 2015 by administering structured interview schedule to a random sample of Dhobi respondents of both Duliajan and Dibrugarh towns of Upper

masons, rickshaw pullers, vegetable shopkeepers, betel leaf sellers, grocery shopkeepers, cloth selling, stationers xeroxing, cycle repairing, wristwatch repairing, mobile repairing, photo shop, carpentry shops, cotton goods shop, sweet shop, decorating and dry cleaning etc. Some of Dhobi women work as domestic servants in towns. Some Dhobis are government employees, middle class farmers and working in private firms. Besides, a large number of Dhobi young men and women are either unemployed or underemployed. During British period, several reformative measures of government gradually changed the socio-political and administrative structures in the region. Dhobis found new opportunities in the changing political structures. However, one can perceive occupational

also results in social, cultural, | jobs like carpenters, car drivers, | mobility and the resultant change in social behaviour and institutions in a section of the urban Dhobis. A question arises: What kind of interrelationship is perceived between occupational mobility and institutional change specially family patterns among Dhobis in the urban and industrial areas of Assam, specially the towns in Upper Assam?

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Kaisth (1987) and Sahay (1998) reveal that the Dhobi caste has undergone significant change in its occupation. Channa (1999) who supports the agglomeration thesis on the origin of caste system as put forwarded by Karve (1961) and supported by Berreman, Habib and others by using data on Dhobis (washermen) of Delhi states that though social and ritual practices of Dhobis are different from higher castes, but sanskrisation and westernisation have brought significant changes in their life style. Singh (1987) reveals that Dhobis and other scheduled castes have reservation in the village panchayats, cooperative societies and at other levels, but small minorities of families have access to sources of power and privileges.

Thus, Dhobis have undergone significant change in their occupation. Though social and ritual practices of Dhobis are different from higher castes but sanskrisation and westernisation have brought significant change in their life style. On the other hand, a small minority of their family has access to the sources of power and privilege.

III. OBJECTIVE:

To understand the interrelationship of occupational mobility and institutional change specially family patterns among Dhobis of Duliajan and Dibrugarh towns of upper Assam.

IV. METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on oral responses collected from a random sample of 428 Hindi and Bengali speaking Dhobis of Duliajan and Dibrugarh towns of upper Assam by administering a structured interview schedule. A stratified sample of 30.63% from adult Dhobis has been taken from the universe (1397) after enlisting all the units with the help of electoral rolls and informed persons of the Dhobi communities in both towns. First, the universe was divided into three age groups (18-35, 36-59 and 60 & above) and then males and females were selected equally in each of the age groups by random sampling method. The study has analysed the empirical data in a comparative perspective of occupational mobility and change in family patterns of the Dhobi respondents of both Duliajan and Dibrugarh towns of upper Assam. At first, tables are classified and analysed those who experience occupational mobility and those who do not with change in family patterns; and finding are drawn by analysing average of two towns on occupational aspects.

V. OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY AND CHANGE IN FAMILY PATTERNS:

Family patterns among Dhobis have been changing gradually since independence under influence of urbanization, industrialization, modernization, globalization and other forces that lead occupational mobility. It is studied through the following factors: i) Change in Family Type ii) Change in the Head's Position in Family and iii) Change in Gender Relationship in Family, which also refers continuity and change in their family patterns.

Occupational mobility of Dhobis is seen to be aware about their family type. The relationship between occupational mobility and the change in family type among the Dhobis from the two towns is given in the following table:

Table 1
Occupational Mobility and Change in Family Type among the Respondents from Duliajan & Dibrugarh Town
 (Percentage in Parentheses)

Status of the Respondents' Occupational Mobility	No. of the Respondents								
	Duliajan Town			Dibrugarh Town			Grand Total		
	Joint Family	Nuclear Family	Total	Joint Family	Nuclear Family	Total	Joint Family	Nuclear Family	Total
Experienced No Occupational Mobility	34 (43.58)	13 (34.21)	47 (40.51)	75 (48.70)	71 (44.93)	146 (46.79)	109 (46.98)	84 (42.85)	235 (54.90)
Experienced Occupational Mobility	44 (56.41)	25 (65.78)	69 (59.48)	79 (51.29)	87 (55.06)	166 (53.20)	123 (53.01)	112 (57.14)	193 (45.09)
Total	78 (100)	38 (100)	116 (100)	154 (100)	158 (100)	312 (100)	232 (100)	196 (100)	428 (100)

Source: Field Study Conducted During 25th Oct-3rd Dec 2015

The table shows that 57.14% occupational mobile respondents have nuclear family and 53.01% have joint family. That is, more of the Dhobi respondents with nuclear family have occupational mobility. Comparatively, more of the Duliajan Dhobi respondents with occupational mobility than their Dibrugarh counterparts have nuclear family.

This means that occupational mobility has a significant relationship with the change in family type of urban setting of the respondents.

The following table establishes a relationship between occupational mobility and change in head's position among the respondents from the two towns:

Table 2
Occupational Mobility and Change in the Head's Position in Family among the Respondents from Duliajan & Dibrugarh Town
 (Percentage in Parentheses)

Status of the Respondents' Occupational Mobility	No. of the Respondents								
	Duliajan Town			Dibrugarh Town			Grand Total		
	Change in Headship occurred	Change in Headship did not occur	Total	Change in Headship occurred	Change in Headship did not occur	Total	Change in Headship occurred	Change in Headship did not occur	Total
Experienced No Occupational Mobility	18 (26.47)	29 (60.41)	47 (40.51)	108 (43.90)	38 (57.57)	146 (46.79)	126 (40.12)	67 (58.77)	193 (45.09)
Experienced Occupational Mobility	50 (73.52)	19 (39.58)	69 (59.48)	138 (56.09)	28 (42.42)	166 (53.20)	188 (59.87)	47 (41.22)	235 (54.90)
Total	68 (100)	48 (100)	116 (100)	246 (100)	66 (100)	312 (100)	314 (100)	114 (100)	428 (100)

Source: Field Study Conducted During 25th Oct-3rd Dec 2015.

The table depicts that 59.87% occupational mobile respondents experienced a change in the position of family head while 41.22% of the respondents experienced no change in the position. This difference shows that occupational mobility is a significant factor to bring a change in family head's

position. More of the Duliajan Dhobi respondents with occupational mobility than their Dibrugarh counterparts have experienced change in family head’s position.

The relationship between occupational mobility and the change in gender relationship in the Dhobi respondents’ families in the two towns is shown in the following table:

Table 3
Occupational Mobility and the Change in Gender Relationship in Family among the Respondents from Duliajan & Dibrugarh Town
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Status of the Respondents’ Occupational Mobility	No. of Respondents								
	Duliajan Town			Dibrugarh Town			Grand Total		
	Change in gender relationship occurred	Change in gender relationship did not occur	Total	Change in gender relationship occurred	Change in gender relationship did not occur	Total	Change in gender relationship occurred	Change in gender relationship did not occur	Total
Experienced No Occupational Mobility	15 (23.43)	32 (61.53)	47 (40.51)	35 (28.92)	111 (58.11)	146 (46.79)	50 (27.02)	143 (58.84)	193 (45.09)
Experienced Occupational Mobility	49 (76.56)	20 (38.46)	69 (59.48)	86 (71.07)	80 (41.88)	166 (53.20)	135 (72.97)	100 (41.15)	235 (54.90)
Total	64 (100)	52 (100)	116 (100)	121 (100)	191 (100)	312 (100)	185 (100)	243 (100)	428 (100)

Source: Field Study Conducted During 25th Oct-3rd Dec 2015

The table shows 72.97% occupational mobile respondents who experienced change in gender relationship while 41.15% of the respondent experienced no change in their families. The figures indicate a positive relationship between occupational mobility and the change in gender relationship among Dhobis.

More of the Duliajan Dhobi respondents with occupational mobility than their Dibrugarh counterparts experienced a change in gender relationship in their families.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

1. Occupational mobility plays a vital role in a change from joint family to nuclear family among the respondents. It is seen that 57.14% and 53.01% occupational mobile respondents have nuclear family and joint family respectively. More of the Duliajan Dhobi respondents (65.78%) with occupational mobility than their Dibrugarh (57.14%) counterparts have nuclear family.
2. It is seen that 59.87% occupational mobile respondents experienced a change in the position of family head while rest of them experienced no change in the position. Comparatively, more of the Duliajan respondents with occupational mobility than their Dibrugarh counterparts have experienced change in family head’s position.
3. It is also seen that 72.97% occupational mobile respondents who experienced a change in gender relationship while 41.15% of the respondent experienced no change in their families. Comparatively, more of the Duliajan Dhobi respondents with occupational mobility than their Dibrugarh counterparts experienced a change in gender relationship in their families.

VII. CONCLUSION:

Occupational mobility closely associated with change from joint family to nuclear family, change in position of family head and change in gender relationship. Thus, occupational mobility plays significant role in institutional change specially family patterns among Dhobis of Duliajan and Dibrugarh towns of upper Assam. It is also seen that comparatively change in family pattern in respect of family type, position of family head and gender relationship is faster in Duliajan town than Dibrugarh town in this regard.

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