Chapter V

EDUCATION

In Chapter III, we examined education in the context of social mobility. We discussed the long debate that has been raging on the question of whether education, linked with occupational change, is a source of mobility or not. One group supports the position that education is the single largest determinant of occupational change and is therefore a ladder to mobility. The other view holds that education, by reinforcing the advantages that the elite already have over others, merely reinforces the existing inequalities.

In following the educational careers of school children in Britain, Douglas found that nearly 50% of children of high ability from lower manual working class homes left school by the time they were 16; in contrast, only 10% and 22% respectively of the upper and lower middle class pupils of the same ability levels had left school. In addition to social class, said Douglas, the educational history of the parents, their occupational aspirations for their children, the size of the family and the degree of insecurity in the family also influenced educational careers. Social class is not the only source of inequality in education, sex is a source of inequality too, with women less likely than men to
proceed to higher levels of education.²

We have already seen that schooling becomes an important means of allocation to occupational position. Education has therefore become an intervening variable in the process of social mobility and stratification. Although social background is still a major influence on the job an individual will obtain, the effects of social background are still mediated through the educational system. A father in a powerful position can probably ensure a well paid occupation for his son, irrespective of his academic record; but it is usually necessary for that son to obtain first a certain level of education. Since high levels of education have become necessary credentials for entry into well rewarded occupations, educational qualifications are assets in social mobility. Competition for access to educational qualifications becomes an important instrumental means, whereby the different social classes compete for social and occupational rewards, rather than a search for knowledge in a pure or abstract sense.

But, as levels of education rise in a country, education necessarily becomes a less discriminating qualification for occupation. Boudon³ discusses an extreme case. For example, if everyone were to graduate from higher education, educational qualifications would be of little help in getting a job, and a person's position in life would depend,
as it did earlier, on his family or personality or luck. Boudon stresses the paradox this situation creates: people strive to raise the educational levels of their children so that they can get good jobs, but their success in getting children educated means that these levels of education are no longer sufficient to obtain good jobs.

This growing demand for and reliance on formal educational qualifications -- degrees, diplomas and certificates has been labelled 'credentialism'. Job-seekers wishing to give themselves competitive advantages over others now have to acquire even higher qualifications, and employers come to demand such advanced qualifications as a matter of course.

When India's traditional society came into contact with the British, the most effective agent of socio-cultural change proved to be the educational system. All groups in India did not take to this new western education as readily. The Hindus, barring the twice born castes, denied education to the lower castes, and so these groups were not initially affected. The religious minorities, being outside the pale of the system, too, did not embrace education with equal readiness. Of all the minorities, the Parsis took the earliest and greatest advantage of new educational opportunities. Above all, members of middle and poor Parsee classes made use of new educational institutions. A higher than
average number of Parsis acquired the lingual and educational qualifications necessary for access to new occupation roles in the new technical and commercial occupations. They also considered the education to women to be especially important, and were far ahead of other communities in this respect. The eagerness to learn and become educated, which had overtaken the community by the end of the 19th century, and the establishment of educational institutions by the community itself led to the Parsis having the highest percentage of literacy of all Indian communities.

The Muslims have remained educationally one of the most backward communities. Their clergy resisted the Christian linked western education. Unlike the Parsis who were economically placed well enough to be able to afford education, the bulk of Indian Muslims were far too poor to take to education.

The other minorities fall between the Parsis and Muslims in terms of education linked mobility. In terms of literacy, the Jains, the Christians and the Jews were near the Parsi end of the spectrum in 1931. (See Table V.1) What distinguished the Parsis was the high level of education they sought. The Jains, and the Marwaris concentrated on basic literary skills which were required for their trading and business occupations. The Jains did begin later to take to professions, despite their concentration in industry,6

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but the Marwaris' enhancement of education levels was primarily again oriented to their occupational interests, so that many took to business management after independence.  

The other factor which needs mention is the low percentage of literates among women compared with men except in the case of the Parsis, Jews and Christians.

Table V.1: Literacy Rates of Different Indian Communities in 1931

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>% Literate</th>
<th>% Literate</th>
<th>% Literate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(of persons over 5 years of age)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikhs</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jains</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parsis</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>73.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhists</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribal</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India - Total</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Where do the Syrian Christians stand in relation to education and social mobility? We discussed in Chapter II, how educational expansion in Kerala, beginning with the C.M.S. efforts in the early 19th century, was marked. It was also associated very significantly with the church and missionary activity. As Christians sent their children to
schools in large numbers, they became educationally one of the most advanced communities in Kerala. By 1941 their literacy rate was 73%. Until 1922, though, when the devas-wom or temple department was separated from the Revenue department, no non-caste Hindu was permitted in government service. Despite this, Syrians found lucrative jobs in clerical and management firms run by Europeans. Once government service was open to them, they strongly registered their presence. Evidence of the cumulative impact of educational provision, reservation and social change on the traditional caste and communal structure is contained in the 1970 Backward Classes Reservations Commission Report, (see Table V.2).

Education is regarded among the Syrian Christians as important. It is seen as prestigious because it is a ticket to a respectable occupation. Virtually all Malayali children attend the five standards of primary school, most continue through the three standards of upper primary school, and one-third reach the final tenth standard of high school.

Rel is in her late fifties and lives in a village in the plains, about one hundred and fifty kilometres from Kottayam. She herself received only four years of education, as she was one of a large family of five and her
Table V.2: Kerala 1968: Index of Appointment in Government Service by Caste and Community
(100=number of appointments exactly proportional to community's representation in population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Estimated percentage of population 1968</th>
<th>Services under Government &amp; Legislature</th>
<th>Kerala State Electricity Board</th>
<th>Kerala State Road Transport Corp.</th>
<th>University of Kerala</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Braining</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nair</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elhava</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin Catholic</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Castes</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Hindu)</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

L.G. - Last Grade; N.G. - Non-Gazetted; G - Gazetted.

The term L.G. is used for the bottom most grades of Government service.

Source: Based on Backward Classes Reservation Commission, Vol.2, Appendices 15, 16 and 17.
father was not economically well-off. She came to this village after her marriage. Her husband was an army jawan and always lived away from home. Rel stayed back in the village with her two daughters. Not having completed her basic education, she could not get a job, nor was her husband able to send her very much money. She was determined to see that her daughters had a good start in life, and, as she saw, it, the only way was through education.

The only real asset Rel had were four cows. She began to sell the milk, even denying it to her own children, and sending them to school on rice gruel. Over four or five years, she was able to buy two more cows. 'It was a hard life', she recalls, 'every aspect of looking after the cows was done by me, not an easy thing. I know many things were said about me in this village. I overhead someone refer to me as a hard hearted mother, because I denied my children many things.' Undaunted, she struggled and put both her daughters through college where they received B.A. and B.Ed. degrees. Both are now teachers, one lives in Africa, and the other lives in the village while her husband, is away in Saudi Arabia. In fact, her daughter in Africa was able to go there directly as a result of her educational qualifications, because her husband wanted to marry someone who would be able to work there, and a teaching job was still easy to
get, and well paid too. Both daughters are immensely proud of their mother, and ensure that she now leads a comfortable life.

The desire for education cuts across income barriers. If Rel struggled, Re2 did not yet he too wanted education for his son and daughter. Re2, who is in his seventies, lives in the plantation region near Kottayam. He is a wealthy planter, owning a large estate and belongs to a family that has always looked on education as important, even though their major occupational interest was agriculture. The Catholics took to western education only in the late 19th century, much after other Christian groups. In this predominantly Catholic town, Re2's family was among the first to send its children to school. Re2's generation, consisting of three brothers, all attended the local school run by the church, as did Re2's own children. Re2's son is now a doctor, practising in Australia, and his daughter runs a catering service in Madras where she has lived after her marriage.

In the case of Re3, a large family brought home the realization that education would be critical if his children were to get ahead in life. He has about fifty cents of land in a village not far from Kottayam. It is well known for the number of people from there who have migrated to the Middle East. Re3 and his brother followed in their father's
footsteps and took to paddy cultivation. Along with this, they owned a small provision store. Re3, in his sixties, who lives along with his wife, has five children. He channelled all his money into the education of his children. He clearly articulated his views:

Education was the only way my children could improve their lot in life. If I had been a rich landowner, things might have been different, but since I did not own very much land, the only start in life that I could give my children was education.

To give them that start in life, each of Re3’s children received high school education. One of the sons works in Bombay as a peon in a company office, his eldest. The other two sons are in Dubai, working as security guards in companies. Re3’s eldest daughter is also in the gulf, having married a carpenter. His other daughter is a laboratory assistant in Gujarat.

Education is important and prestigious. But there is a distinction. What becomes critical is the level of education that is sought. The lower the income group, the lower the level of education that is sought. The aspiration of the parents for their children, also has an influence on the level of education, as also the size of the family. Notice the variation in education levels sought by Re1, Re2 and Re3. In Re1’s case, finance was an obstacle, but her aspiration for her children made her struggle and send them to
college and study the liberal arts. Re2 being from a wealthy family did not have to tackle the question of finance, so the decision he had to make, he says, was not whether higher education, but what kind of higher education. Re3 had too many children to have the luxury of being able to educate them beyond school. Possibly the variations in levels of education sought stem from a realistic appraisal of individual situations.

One important reason for this variation in education levels is that money can buy higher levels of education. To a greater extent than anywhere else in India, education is Kerala has been run by private agencies. In 1990-91 of the 12,133 schools in the state (including lower primary, upper primary & high school) 7,648 were under private management. In the same period at the college level, 132 out of 172 arts and science college were privately run. In Kottayam district, out of 21 colleges, 20 are under private management. In such private colleges, donations or what is referred to as capitation fee, are commonly required for admission, and appointment to the staff. Professional colleges, for medical and engineering students, are particularly characterized by such capitation fees, and the practice is especially widespread in Karnataka. The existence of a large private sector of education guarantees to those who can afford the fees, an education which provides easier access to 'good'
jobs, that is professional jobs. Education is an integral part of society, and the content and organization of education are likely to reflect the prejudices, inequalities, and social and economic priorities of that society. The importance attached to prestigious occupations like that of an engineer or doctor is reflected in the number of private colleges providing the required education.

This brings out two distinct attitudes. Those occupations which are greatly prized also required greater levels of education. This kind of education is desired, but not everyone can afford it. Re2 is one of the 'lucky' ones. Although his son did not make it to medical college through the competitive examinations, Re2 could get him admitted to a well-known medical college, privately run. Although he condemns this practice of paying for a seat at the level of principle, he justifies his action by saying that even though he paid money, the boy could get in because he was basically bright, and had a good academic record. Re3, on the other has a contemptuous attitude about 'buying' education. Did he not want this children to be better educated, so that better jobs would be available to the, we probed. The response was:

What is the use of having higher education? There is no guarantee of a job here, with employment being so difficult. My sons would not have got into a professional college, and unlike my neighbour, I never
bought education for my sons.

Re3's wife intervenes by saying that he could not afford the capitation fee, and that made him question the use of higher education. 'Our neighbour's sons are fortunate that their parents could put them into medical college. Now they earn so much and at the same time, they are respected because they are doctors,' she says. Roc1's views had been similar to Re3's, an apparent contempt for "rich men who buy education for their children". These who can afford it, do send their children for higher education, even if it means paying for it. Those who cannot afford it, and necessarily have to remain content with lower levels of education and therefore less prestigious and well-paid jobs, condemn such behaviour.

In a system where education is a service to be bought by paying a price, the level of education is a function of the level of income. But if education is the only source of livelihood then the motivation to acquire it is very high.

Competition for access to educational qualifications becomes an instrumental means where social classes compete for social and occupational rewards rather than a search for knowledge. There is clearly an instrumental orientation to education, revolving around investment and return. It is seen as means of entry into a job and prestige. Basic school education is always pursued, but beyond that, decisions are made in terms of a cost benefit analysis. Re3 for
one, is quite satisfied with the school education his sons received. Professional education, as he explained, was out. He could have struggled and invested in a few more years of college education, but 'after three years, what kind of job would they have got, at best, a post in a government office.' Today, two of the sons are in the Gulf, and although they struggle and work hard, they are able to support their families, who are here, and send their parents medicines and other necessities. Re3 talks of his sister's son, for whom the parents had great ambitions, and educated him upto college. After that began the hunt for employment. Everywhere, they were so many people, like him, and everywhere they asked for money. Finally, the boy was so disillusioned, he set up a small shop, which luckily is doing well. This he could have done without going in for college education.

Roc4, the banker, was well able to afford to send his sons for higher education. But, he said, if either son had shown an aptitude for engineering for instance, he would have helped them. Since they did not, he didn't see the need for wasting money on them. Basic education was enough. For Re3, basic education was high school, for Roc4, graduation. Depending on one's economic class, the minimum level of education that is sought varies.
Re4 lives in the Kuttanad plains and is from a wealthy and old family of the area. Now in his seventies, he himself received a degree in engineering in Madras after completing his schooling at the mission school in Kottayam. 'It was quite unusual in those days for anyone to go in for higher education, but I was very enthusiastic and my father did not stop me.' But when he began to look for a job in Madras, and other places, there was not much encouragement. Since he was the only son, he had to return. He does not look on that education as having been wasted, but accepts that he would have been in the same position even without that education. He always had very high educational aspirations for his children. When his eldest son finished school and wanted to become a doctor, he was happy. But although he could afford to send him to a private college, he refused to do it as a matter of principle. Of all our respondents, Re4 was the only one who had taken such a decision. His son went on to become a college professor in Madras.

Occupations have become slotted in terms of the educational prerequisites that are needed for it. Prestigious jobs are also those associated with long training and high investment. With education levels rising, education becomes a less discriminating qualification for occupation. Even if one does have education, there is no job available. Job seekers need higher and higher educational qualifications.
So, for the same educational level of the parent the child does not get a job of the same level. In 1959, the menacing proportions of unemployment in Kerala were already being noticed. The 1971 committee estimated total unemployment at 800,000, of which one quarter consisted of educated unemployed. An important dimension of the unemployment problem in Kerala is the growing number of educated unemployed. By 1978, the number of educated work-seekers registered with employment exchanges was 53% of those seeking work through employment exchange. By 1981 the number of work seekers who had qualifications of SSLC or above was 63.7% of these seeking work through employment exchange (see Table V.3). The total number of professionally and technically qualified job seekers rose from 43,450 in 1981 to 100,861 in 1990. Lower income groups tend to pursue the critical minimum level of education required to obtain a job.

There is a general contempt towards those who go to the Gulf as against those who go to the United States of America in search of employment. This is as a result of the popular perception that jobs in America are those which are prestigious and require high educational levels. The Gulf, it is felt, absorbs workers in skilled and semi-skilled occupations, which are lower in prestige and in education levels. This is irrespective of the fact that many professionals too make it to the Gulf; the popular perception is otherwise.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Professional &amp; Technical</th>
<th>Total Work Seekers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1579164</td>
<td>38205</td>
<td>1617369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1903719</td>
<td>43450</td>
<td>1947169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>2096056</td>
<td>46651</td>
<td>2132707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>2262240</td>
<td>54256</td>
<td>2316496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>2458206</td>
<td>83750</td>
<td>2541956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>2574074</td>
<td>68728</td>
<td>2642802</td>
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<tr>
<td>1986</td>
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<td>79335</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>2991022</td>
<td>87011</td>
<td>3078033</td>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>2901051</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>3092031</td>
<td>92846</td>
<td>3188877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>33200035</td>
<td>105260</td>
<td>3425285</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: General includes job seekers with qualifications below SSLC, SSC, PDC, Graduate and Post-Graduates.

All this, however, is in so far as one can 'afford' the attitude. The moment it is necessary, the 'reconciliation' to going to the Gulf comes through. Re5, is one of those who can afford a contemptuous attitude. A widow in the early sixties, she lives in her ancestral home on the waterfront in Kottayam. Hers was one of the earliest families which settled in Kottayam. A traditionally wealthy family, it was initially in the 'sharkara' or molasses, trade, later ventured into money lending, and by the end of the 19th century had acquired land as well. Re5's grand father combined paddy cultivation with money lending. His older son managed the business, along with his brother, Re5's father.
Her uncle had seven children, but she was the only child, and therefore the sole inheritor of her family property. Re5 was married to a wealthy advocate in Madras, and moved there to a lifestyle quite unlike her own. They were very westernized and sophisticated, she says. A few years ago, when her father died she returned to look after the property while her husband and only son stayed on in Madras. She would shuttle back and forth, but a year ago, her husband who was a diabetes patient died. Then her son who had completed his education and was working as a chartered accountant, also came to Kottayam. She now feels that there was no need for her son to have unnecessarily been sent for higher education. In Madras he worked in a big firm and earned well, but here things are different, and he does not earn as much. She does not appear to see that he had a choice regarding the move to Kottayam. Who would have looked after this place then, and it has been in their family for generations.

She observed:

Professional education is all very well, but what is the result? My son is forced to live here, and he is not accustomed to this way of life. I don’t know how long he will stay. My old mother lives here alone, how can I leave her? He does not even earn very much.

To add to her troubles, her son married an Anglo-Indian girl with whom he worked in Madras. The fact that the girl is 168
Christian does not please her. At least if it had been a
girl from our church, we would have get some dowry. She
bemoans.

She feels that her family declined, because of the new
fangled ideas on education. Nowadays, she says, a little
education is not enough. One studies for years, and in the
village, and even country, one doesn’t get a suitable job.
Her paternal cousins live in the same street as Re5. All
their children are doctors, lawyers or engineers. They all
work outside Kerala, some in England and the United States
of America. ‘We are not part of the Gulf centre.’ She says
firmly, ‘that is for painters and carpenters and families
who send their daughters as nurses.’ But none of them wants
to come back here. In her days, being a graduate was con-
sidered a great achievement, and her husband, a lawyer,
could have literally walked into a job. Today being a
graduate has no meaning, because everyone is a graduate.
She says, she read somewhere about many graduates in Kerala
becoming bus drivers and conductors, because they couldn’t
get jobs and says this shocked her very much.

Unlike Re6, Re3 was not, as we saw, able to educate his
children very highly. As far as he is concerned his sons
who work as security officers have moved upward. Given
their level of education, they did not have much of a future
here. Also, paddy cultivation is no longer a viable means of livelihood. What could they have done here, he asks. His daughter, too, who works as a nurse, is lucky, according to him. His son arranged for her training in Bombay, and then she went to the Gulf. At least her education has not been wasted, Re3 says.

The joint family ethic often calls for the sacrifice of the elder children, boys or girls. In the case of girls, it means the postponement of marriage for want of dowry, educating the younger ones etc. But the required reciprocity from the younger ones does not always take place.

In Re6's case, his own educational aspirations did not succeed. He is in his seventies and lives near Kottayam as a paddy cultivator. Their father was in agriculture, and Re6 was one of his sons. Re6 had just completed his schooling and wanted to go on to college. Their neighbour's son was a graduate, and had joined a big company as an executive, and this had influenced Re6 a great deal. But some one had to look after the land as his father was growing old. His father said that as the eldest, Re6 should take on the responsibility. Re6 said reflectively,

I told my father that I would finish college and then return to help him. He discouraged me, saying that if I studied further, I would think agriculture was not enough for me, because I had been trained for a better job.
So he stayed back, while his brother went out to study and become a manager of a big factory in Madras. Re6 says that because he never had higher education, he had hopes that his children would be graduates and become white collar workers or may be even doctors. He had to sell some of his land to finance the college education of his three sons. But he found that the years had changed educational requirements. As a graduate his brother became a manager of a factory. His sons, when they became graduates could not even get clerical jobs, without some money passing hands. To work in big companies, they have to study some more, he was told. It was very frustrating for his children, who had always been told that if they became graduates, they would get very good jobs. Two of them decided to stay on in agriculture, but the youngest got a job on a tea estate and works as a supervisor there. Re6's brother's children did well for themselves, entering medicine and the management cadre of a firm. Whenever people talk about their success, Re6's children always point out that it was their father's sacrifice that made for their cousins' achievements. The joint family ethic operates, it is true, but not necessarily ungrudgingly.

Western education was introduced in Kerala as a consequence of missionary efforts particularly the C.M.S. During the 19th century, many Syrians benefited from the
C.H.S. connection, not only because it took care of their school and higher education, but also because it paved the way for lucrative jobs. T.C. Poonen was the first Malayali to study in Britain. A C.M.S. Syrian he studied in Kottayam, Calicut and Madras, before going to study law in Britain in 1809. All these travels had been facilitated by C.M.S. contacts. The missionary connection was thus a useful one for education. Education has been closely associated with Christian missionary activities. Their network of schools, colleges and technical institutions is very large. Being a Christian was obviously a great advantage.

It is interesting that every respondent we spoke to said their children had studied in the church run school. The linkage between educational institutions and religion or caste has been marked in Kerala. Even for rest of the population, Nairs, Ezhavas etc., if schools sponsored by their castes exist (the Nair Service Society for example), the preference to go to such schools has become the pattern. But even if one does get education, today, it is not functional, as the Syrians see it, that is as an avenue for jobs, as we saw earlier. Further, even the missionary connections become dysfunctional, because although the church can facilitate education, acquisition of education in itself is not helpful. To the extent that the church might sponsor professional education, perhaps, it puts such stu-
This is what happened to Re7. In her late forties, she lives with her husband and two children in a village about two hundred kilometres from Kottayam. She is, however, originally from another town, which is an important centre of Catholic organization and activity. Her parents were both teachers in one of the Catholic schools; Re7 was one of two daughters, and was very keen to study medicine. Paying capitation fees was out of the question for Re7's parents, and the well-known mission run medical college in neighbouring Tamil Nadu was Protestant, and, she says, would not have easily taken her in. Her parents were keen to help her realize her ambition. They met the Bishop, and explained Re7's case to him. Since she was a bright student, the church sponsored her medical education in Italy. She was away for seven years in a small town near Rome. When she left India, there were six other students, who like her had been sponsored by the Church. They travelled by ship together, but once they reached Italy, each was sent to a different place. They were told that this was to ensure that they mixed with other students and, more importantly, learn Italian, which was the medium of instruction. She was very unhappy at first, being unused to the cold, the language and the food. She says that the most difficult adjustment she had to make was to the food, but when she
When Re7 returned to India, she married a college professor, who was from a well-known catholic family and settled down in a new place. She began to work in the mission hospital. Her sister did a B.Ed. after completing her graduation, and is now married to a company executive in Bombay, and works in a well-known convent school there.

We asked Re6 whether the church could have helped his children. He replied that his sons had studied in mission schools and colleges without any problem. Given the problem for admission to schools and colleges, this in itself was something. But beyond that, what kind of job was available for a graduate? If there was a priest in the family, maybe he could have helped in getting employment in one of the church organization, but even for that, there are so many people.

It is interesting that the usual tendency of not educating girls for jobs, is not prevalent in the Syrian case. The Syrian case is reflective of the general situation in Kerala. The female literacy rate in 1991 was 86.93% as against the all Kerala literacy figure of 90.59%. However, this is particularly the case when there are no sons in the family. We saw how, in the case of Re1, both her daughters were trained for jobs, doing their B.Ed., so
that they could get jobs as teachers. This was also true of Re7, whose parents, albeit through church sponsorship, sent her to Italy, and trained her sister to be a teacher. But girls are educated, even when there are sons in the family. Witness Re3's daughters, one a nurse, and the other a laboratory assistant. In Re2's case, though, there is a difference which brings out the attitude that if there are sons and daughters, in the wealthier families, they are educated differently. Re2 sent his son to medical college after paying capitation fees. Although his son is now in Australia, Re2 is hopeful that he will soon return and set up a lucrative practice, perhaps a full-fledged hospital. In the case of his daughter, she completed her graduation, and married soon after.

In wealthy families like Re2's in the case of professional education which requires longer and heavier investment, which they can afford, the son is far likelier to be educated than the daughter. Re8, who is in his early fifties, belongs to another wealthy plantation family living near Kottayam. Like Re2, he has two children, a girl and a boy. His wife works in a school, and they have always been concerned about the need to educate their children, both boy and girl. When we asked what his children did, we learnt that his daughter completed a B.Ed. and is married to a businessman in Cochin. His son is in the last year of
medicine at a private medical college in Karnataka. Did he not want to send his daughter to medical college, or was she not bright enough? On the contrary, Re8 said that she had always been ahead or her brother academically. But he could not afford to send both to medical college and he decided that as an investment it made more sense to send the son. He explained:

After all, in medicine, one has to study for such a long time, and getting my daughter married after that would have been a problem. In the case of my son once he is a doctor, not only will he be able to set up a good practice, but also get a bride from a very good family. Being a doctor will make him very eligible.

Re9 is in her early forties and lives in Kottayam. She lives there with her husband who works as a tea consultant. He used to work on a plantation, but took voluntary retirement and works on his own. They have one daughter, who is in the third year of medicine at a private medical college in Madras. Re9 herself is a teacher and, although she disapproves of paying capitation fees, feels that if people can afford to pay, then the education that one gets is worth it. What is the point in saving up all our money to give her later, she thought. In her own family, her brothers and sisters were educated according to their aptitude. In fact her brother did a Master's degree before joining the administrative service, and her sister is an engineer. In the case of Re9's sister, she joined engineering through the
Like occupational change, education has been a source of mobility for the Syrian Christians. Education is regarded as prestigious because it is an avenue to a respectable occupation. But the level of education that is sought varies. Given Kerala's increasing numbers of educated unemployed, higher and higher levels of education are demanded in order to obtain good jobs. In such a situation, not all Syrian Christians aspire to the same education levels. Social class influences the level and kind of education that is sought. To that extent, education has done little to reduce inequalities between income groups. Thus although many Syrian Christians are highly educated, and in well paid and prestigious jobs, not all of them are so. Like the Parsis, professional occupations, as we saw in Chapter IV occupy a high prestige value among the Syrian Christians. These occupations combine in one stroke two needs: 1) the need for the high education level that is associated with professional occupations which is prestigious in itself, and 2) the need for a prestigious occupation that is also lucrative. But professional education involves a long period of study and high investment. Lower income groups cannot afford to send their children for such education, as they are required to contribute to family income or at any rate cannot get further
assistance from the family. Also, because professional education is available privately, though at a price, it becomes restricted to those, in a highly competitive environment, who can afford to pay for it.

This brings about two sets of attitudes. People have realistic aspirations for their children. There is an inherent pragmatism in the Syrian thinking. Even though professional education is prized, lower income groups can rarely aspire to it. These people are strongly contemptuous of those who can buy education for their children, but this contempt is tinged with envy. Those who can afford it do not send their children for such courses as a matter of course. If the children are bright, then they are sent, even if a capitation fee has to be paid. If they are not, then efforts in this direction are not wasted. The investment in education is made if one is reasonably sure of the return on the investment.

This instrumental orientation to education is clearly evident. Education is perceived as an investment, which yields social and economic rewards. Thus while school education is almost always sought, education at a higher level is undertaken after a cost benefit analysis. Because education even at the college level does not ensure a job, as it did earlier, not all Syrians take to it. This is unlike the Parsis who are heavily represented in profession-
al and technical education.

The Syrian Christian catholicity of occupation and the lack of occupational tradition is reinforced by their behaviour in education. Although everyone does not become a professional, it is seen as a desirable occupation. So, if a businessman has bright children, he will send them for engineering or medicine rather than 'waste' his talent on the family business. This is quite unlike the Sindhis or Marwaris, for whom education is important insofar as it helps the occupational tradition.

Although Western education was associated with Christian missionary activity, and Christians benefited a great deal from the educational expansion, today the missionary connection is not of great consequence in regard to educational mobility. Today, education itself does not guarantee a job. So although the church can help in acquiring education, the connection is dysfunctional precisely because education is not helpful in itself.

Nevertheless, education is greatly sought after. For higher income groups, who can afford it, education can lead to professional occupations. For lower income groups who aspire to lower levels of education, often it is the only avenue to mobility.
Educating girls for jobs is not the usual tendency in India. The Syrian Christian case needs to be contrasted with that of the Muslims particularly, but also of the Sindhis. Girls are given education which enables them to seek employment. This is particularly true when there are no sons. Among wealthier families, the interest may extend to giving a girl professional education. The situation changes when there is a son, who is preferentially given, say, professional education, over the girl. This is again a reflection of the pragmatic and instrumental attitude to education.

Because schooling is an important way of allocating people to occupations, education and occupation are closely linked in terms of mobility. Education and occupation are also closely related to, and strongly influence another indicator of social mobility, migration. The following chapter examines the importance of migration as a source of mobility among the Syrian Christians.
Notes:


