INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This study attempts to explore the integration process of Cochin Jews into the Israeli society. The immigration of Cochin Jewry to Israel started in the early 1950s and continued until early 1970s. Initially they struggled very hard as they faced many problems such as language, culture, climate, geographical isolation, and racial discrimination. This study would try to focus on the three major aspects of the integration process involving the Cochin Jews: economic, socio-cultural and political. The time period of the study is from early 1950s to the present. Before we proceed further it would be useful to briefly introduce the Cochin Jews of India. This will be followed by an account of the evolution of Israeli social formation, a theoretical framework of this study, and a review of Cochin socio-political and economic status of Jews in Israel.

JEWS OF COCHIN – AN INTRODUCTION

The Jews of India can be classified into three distinct groups—Cochin Jews of Kerala, Bene Israel of Maharashtra, and Bagdadi Jews who were mainly settled in Calcutta and Bombay. These indigenous Jewish communities lived in India in complete harmony and without any persecution. The total strength of Indian Jews in 1948 was nearly 25,000—about 22,000 Bene Israel, 2,500 Cochin Jews and around 1,000 Bagdadi Jews.1 The Indian Jews started migrating to Israel since 1948 with the formation of the State of Israel. At present, the Indian Jewry comprises of around 60,000 Jews in Israel. 2 Today, the current population of Bene Israel has reached to about 50,000 and that of the Cochin Jews to 9,000 in Israel.3 There are very few Bagdadi Jews in Israel as many of them migrated to USA, Canada and Australia after the independence of India. It is interesting to note that the Indian Jews were one of the few Jewish communities which never faced persecution and anti-semitism during their

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diasporic life. The most numerous of the Jewish groups in India are the Marathi speaking Jews who call themselves *Bene Israel* and who have settled for centuries on the western coast of India in the Konkan region of Maharashtra. In 1951 they numbered about 20,000, but by 1961 their number had fallen to about 16,000 and by 1990 to 3000 only. The *Bene Israelis* who stayed in the Konkan villages were oil pressers and commonly called “*teli*”, the Marathi caste name for oil pressers. But those *Bene Israelis* who settled in Bombay city were engaged in occupations as varied as clerks, skilled carpenters, teachers, mechanics and so on.⁴ On the other hand, the Baghdadi Jews who came to India from various trade centres like Baghdad, Basra, Aden, Iran, and Afghanistan were rich traders mostly settled in Calcutta, Bombay and Pune. The Baghdadi Jews spoke Arabic or, in a few cases, Persian, but soon switched over to English. None of them ever adopted an India language as their mother tongue in a manner that *Bene Israel* and *Cochinis* did. The *Baghdadis* were much closer to British and maintained minimum contacts with the other Jewish groups in India.⁵

The third group, Jews of Cochin, was one of the indigenous communities of Kerala which settled in and around Cochin. From the middle of the fourth century, there is evidence of existence of Jews in the Malabar Coast (i.e. Kerala, the southern state of India). From the middle of the eighth, there is evidence about the existence of Jews in Kerala. The earliest documentation of permanent Jewish settlement is found on two “Copper plates” kept in Kochi Paradesi Synagogue which are engraved in ancient Tamil. They describe the privileges granted to the Jewish Chieftain *Joseph Rabban* by Bhaskara Ravi Varma (962-1020 AD).

There are certain traditions which hold that in Kerala there existed a Jewish Kingdom in “*Shingly*” (Crangannore) and Joseph Rabban and his descendants were considered as the rulers of “*Shingly Kingdom*”. One legend holds that Jews first settled in Kerala during the time of King Solomon when there was trade in teak, ivory, spices and peacock between the land of Israel and Malabar. It is the Bible that contains the first mention of Jews in connection with India. In the book of “*Esther*” India has been mentioned as *Hodu* and *Hodu* in Hebrew means India. Some records say that the Jews came during the times of their Babylonian exile, while some other scholars contend that

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⁵ Ibid, p. 10.
they arrived in Malabar after the destruction of Second Temple. The oral history holds that the Jewish community welcomed the Syrian Christians who arrived in Crangannore in the third century AD.  

According to Benjamin of Tudela who visited India in 1167 A.D., there were several thousand Jews “dark like the other inhabitants”. However, another copper plate which records certain privileges granted to the Syrian Christians by the Hindu ruler Shantanu Ravi Varma, mentions a guild of Jews as custodians of Tarasapalli Church and its lands along with Christians and carries three signatures of witnesses in Hebrew Script.

The Jews of Cochin were divided into two groups - the White Jews (Paradesis or Foreigners) and the Black Jews (Malabarees). The Paradesis came to Kerala coast in the 15th century from Spain and Portugal during the inquisition. It is believed that the Malabaree Jews came to India in about the year 800 B.C. from the Kingdom of Majorca, where their forefathers had been taken as captives with the destruction of the second temple in Jerusalem by the Roman emperor Titus Vespasino in A.D. 72. Another version is that the Malabaree Jews are the descendants of the Jewish slaves who were converted centuries before. The white Jews were very rich traders and monopolized the pepper trade of Kerala until the British period. As they were fluent in European languages as well as in Malayalam and familiar with the European trade practices, they acted as business advisors to Cochin Maharaja in maritime trade. In the seventeenth century the Paradesis merchants were the leading exporters of pepper, timber, amber, rice and cotton. The cordial relations between Jews and the Maharaja of Cochin are documented by the Dutch traveler Van Linschoten who visited Cochin in 1589. He described Jews as being “the king of Cochin’s nearest counselors”. The Raja had allotted a site closest to his own Palace for the Jews. He added that in 1550 Raja of Cochin refused to fight a battle on Saturday because his Jewish soldiers wouldn’t fight on that day and they were the best warriors in his possession. Some of the Malabaree Jews were Shipbuilders and helped the local Rajas in maritime trade.

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11 Ibid, p. 90.
At the same time, Maharaja of Cochin was lenient towards the Paradesi Jews than the Malabaree Jews. Most of the Mudaliars or Jewish chiefs were among the Paradesis. Moreover, Paradesi Jews had access to western education due to their urban living. In contrast, Malabaree Jews, due to their economic backwardness, did not get much opportunity to educate their children. The great majority of Malabaree Jews were poor, with very low income, chiefly engaged as fisherman, book binders, peddlers, petty traders, wood choppers and unskilled labors. The Paradesi Jews never enjoyed any kind of cultural or social relations with the Malabaree Jews and considered them inferior. According to various surveys, the Cochin Jews have never numbered more than 2500 before immigrating to Israel. By 1959 their number had fallen to 370 largely due to their immigration to Israel. Currently the total strength of Cochin Jews in Kerala is not more than 30. This study would be on the Malabaree Jews of Cochin.

In 1637 the Dutch officer, Pereyra de Paiva stated:

At Cochin the Malabree Jewish quarter was in the main street at the other end of the Paradesi synagogue and they were comprised of about 120 families and three synagogues-Cochanangadi, Kadavumbagham and the Tekhumbagam. At Ernakulam 150 families of poor people with two synagogues also called Kadavumbagham, and Tekhumbagam. At Parur there were 100 families living in extreme distress and one synagogue, where two scrolls from the ancient community of Shingli were kept. The other congregations were smaller. Mala had 60 families and one synagogue, Muttam 35 families and one synagogue and Chendamangalam 50 “well-to-do” families and one synagogue.

Later the Dutch captain Visscher in 1730 declared that “they numbered 2,000 souls in Malabar”. In all the towns and villages Cochin Jews (Malabarees) lived on one or two streets only and most of the houses were smaller and less substantial. While in Cochin and Ernakulam the Cochinis had two storied houses, families staying on the first floor and shops on the ground floor. Although private and state supported schools were available, not many Cochin Jews attended them.

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In 1937, Mandelbaum reported the long reticence of the Jews to participate in the educational progress of the state which led them to be classed among those communities that were officially listed as "educationally backward". Very few females attended the schools, but males usually did attend from age six to thirteen or fourteen, then they normally began working.\textsuperscript{14}

The Cochinis had a synagogue oriented life in India and in the beginning of the nineteenth century there were eight Synagogues in Kerala; three Synagogues in Cochin, two in Ernakulam and one each in Mala, Chendamangalam and Parur. The Parur was the only Jewish congregation which was located within the Travancore Kingdom and the rest were all under the control of Cochin Maharaja. The Kerala Synagogue had vast tracts of land and property and the "synagogue council" or "Yogam" managed it. The Cochin Jews were highly religious and their life was revolved around synagogue.\textsuperscript{15}

As Rabinowitz wrote:

\begin{quote}
Poor though the Jews of Cochin are individually, collectively they are possessed of considerable wealth in the form of communal property. Through out centuries and even millennia of their existence there, they have gradually enriched their congregations... (which) posses not only their synagogues but houses and other property on the income of which many of them live.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

The migration of Cochin Jews started with the formation of Israel in 1948. The first group left for Israel in December 1949 under the leadership of Kadavil Meyer from Chendamangalam village. The first group consisted of 17 families, around 100 people, reached Israel on January 5, 1950. The highest migration to Israel was between 1952 and 1958 wherein some 1,800 Jews had migrated to Israel. The Mala congregation was the first one to go enmasse. The "Youth Aliyah" was the main organization which

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, p. 17.
handled the emigration of youth and children. By the mid 1960s most of the Cochin Jews had immigrated to Israel except for a few well to do families.  

EVOLUTION OF THE ISRAELI SOCIAL FORMATION

Jewish Immigration and Settlement

With the unilateral establishment of Israel in 1948, the Jews from all over the world started immigrating to their so-called “home land”. The Israeli state enacted the ‘Law of Return’ in 1950 which guaranteed entry to all Jews to the newly formed Israeli State without any hindrance. It is an “ethno centric law” that applies exclusively to immigrants of Jewish origin. It allows every Jew “except for one who acts against the Jewish people or is liable to endanger state security” to settle in Israel and automatically acquire Israeli citizenship. However the Law of Return is not applicable to thousands of Palestinian refugees who fled the country during 1948 war. In fact, all the hitherto Israeli governments have actively promoted the value and possibility of immigration to Israel throughout the Jewish Diaspora.

The main characteristics of Israel are the Jewish/Zionist nature of the state, the western make up, the ethnocentric setup, the Arab-Israeli dispute, militaristic system and the racial orientation. Israel is a sectarian state grounded in Judaism and Zionism. It is Jewish in the name, emblem, flag, anthem, ceremonies, and natural symbols of the state and especially the use of the Hebrew language. Its origin as a society derived from Europe is of some consequence. The dominant Ashkenazi group beginning with the Zionist settlers and continuing with the recent European immigrants is embedded with the European ethnocentric feeling of superiority and paternalistic attitudes towards Mizrachim and Arabs. The western structure of the Israeli state gives the European

Jews a decisive advantage over the Mizrachim and Israeli Arabs. The colonial nature of Zionism takes various shapes. In brief, Zionism was a movement of white settlers displacing a native, non-European people. The Jewish colonization in Palestine and the elimination of the indigenous Palestinians was a well-planned and systematic strategy of the Zionists with the collusion of imperialistic forces like Britain and the US after Israel’s creation. In 1915 at a conference in Cleveland this is precisely how David Ben-Gurion defined Zionist occupation in Palestine:

Palestine will be built up through the efforts of an industrious people, rich in both material and spiritual terms, who arrived there due to historical necessity in order to create its own homeland. Armed with the tools of modern science and technology, this group of people is prepared to pay any price in order to turn the desolate and parched land into a flowering oasis, fruitful in terms of agricultural and industrial production, culturally developed and intensively inhabited. The model for these efforts will be the achievements of the English settlers in North America and the achievements of the Dutch settlers in South Africa. We can already see this model in action when we look at what Jews have already begun to bring about in Palestine.20

Israeli intelligentsia considered Jewish immigration to Palestine and later to Israel to be a unique phenomenon that cannot be compared to any other migratory movement. This assumption stems from the view that compared to other forms of migration to other destinations for better life and economic prospects, immigration or aliya to Israel is purely on the basis of ideological reasons. Arye Dulzin, treasurer and the former chairman of Jewish Agency executive, defined the difference between a Jew and a Zionist

What is Zionist? That is what are the obligations and practical commandments which the Jew, as a Zionist should be ready to assume, of his own free will, in addition to three commandments to which most Jews in the world are ready to subscribe: love for Israel, concern over Israeli fate, and financial contributors for Israel. Among the additional commandments, I see two whose performance is a test for anyone who calls himself a Zionist: the obligation of *aliya* and the obligation of giving his children a Jewish and a Zionist upbringing. Without assumption of these obligations, being Zionist is merely so much a lip service.21

Later Israeli sociologists like Judith Shuval contested this view and argued that immigration to Israel is also based on “push and pull factors” and not purely on the commitment to Zionism.22 Earlier immigration to Israel is considered a major and indispensable model to emulate by a later Zionist. According to Zionists, Israeli Jews have been “strangers” in their countries of origin and seek to find a new home by means of migration. Immigration or *Aliya* has always been perceived not as a demographic movement but as a value process that expresses the crux of Zionism. Jews who immigrated or made *Aliya* to Israel are called *Olim* – ascenders; those who emigrate from Israel are classified as *Yordin* – descendents. Eisentadt, the proponent of the “Uniqueness approach” describes that “while typical migration is motivated by push, demographic and socio economic factors, “*Aliya*” is motivated by ideological factors”.23 However in the late 1990s critical Israeli sociologists like Sergio Della Pergola concluded that the perception of “*Aliya*” as a unique phenomenon should be reconsidered because immigration to Israel, like that to other destinations, has largely been determined by economic, political, cultural and socio-demographic factors rather than by the ideology of “Zionism”.24

Historically, there were three main divisions among Jews: Mizrachi Jews, who lived in Middle East and North Africa, Sephardi Jews whose language was Ladino and lived in Spain and Portugal till 1492 and Ashkenazim whose language was Yiddish and originally from Europe. With the establishment of Israel the three categories have been reduced to two: Ashkenazim (European and American Origin) and Sephardim – Mizrachim or Edot haMizrach (the Jews of Asian and North African Origin). When Israeli state was founded, 92% of the Jewish population was of European (Ashkenazi) origin and only 8% was of Asian and Africa origin. During 1919 to 1948, 61.3% of Jewish immigrants to Palestine came from Eastern Europe, 24.1% from central and Western European America, 4.2% from the Balkans, and 10.4% from Asia and Africa. This picture changed in 1950s due to the mass immigration of Jews from Asian and African countries. Prior to 1990, 41.5% of the Jewish population in Israel was of Mizrachi origin and 36% of Ashkenazi origin while 22.5% was the Israeli born category. The mass influx of Jews from former Soviet Union however has changed the scenario and elevated the Ashkenazi to the majority status. In 2005, the Ashkenazi population was around 41%, while the Mizrachi was 43%.

The population of Israel is heavily concentrated in the coastal strip, with about three quarters of Jewish inhabitants and two thirds of non-Jewish population. The main reason for the growth of population has been Jewish immigration accounting for 58% of yearly increase between 1948 and 1977. In 1996, 38.4% of Jewish population has been born abroad. These included 1, 202, 2000 born in Europe and America, 3, 27,100 in Africa and 249, 900 in Asia. Of the 2,58,200 Israel born Jews, 1, 98,400 were second generation Israelis. Immigration up to 1940 totaled 4, 82,857 persons of whom nearly 90% came from Europe and America. The biggest wave of immigrants arrived within six years of the founding of the new state. Large numbers have come from North Africa as a result of political developments there and during 1955-64 more than 2,00,000 emigrated from North Africa into Israel. The 1967 gave a flip to

immigration with some 3,000,000 Jews arriving in the period up to the 1973 war. After the 1973 Yom Kippur war, immigration declined heavily from 54,886 in 1973 to 12,599 in 1981. In 1984 around 50,000 Falashas (Ethopia) immigrated to the country. By 1990 with the collapse of the Soviet Union around 1,94,500 Jews immigrated to Israel from Russia and Central Asia. The Jewish immigration from India was also part of this phenomenon.  

Immigration to Israel, 1948-80

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<tr>
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<td>1967</td>
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<td>20,544</td>
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<td>1969</td>
<td>37,804</td>
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28 Ibid, p. 43.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
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Ironically thousands of Palestinians have become homeless and refugees with the formation of Israel and they are totally excluded from the mainstream debate. Israeli state was occupied and formed by the Jews which was to be the national home of the
Jewish people and this position was reflected in all spheres of Israeli state- collective and formal identity of the state, institutional structure, allocation of resources, and determination of national priorities. The Jewish people have branded the Israeli Arabs as hostile minority and have legitimized the militaristic tendencies in Israel at the expense of its civilian character. The so called "internal security policy" of Israel is intimately connected with the Jewish/Zionist character of the state. The Israeli Arabs are in the "double periphery" and are located at the margins of Israeli society. Israeli Arabs are the marginalized and secluded lot from the mainstream society and have always remained outside the borders of Israeli polity. At present Palestinian Arabs, who constitute around 17 percent of Israelis total population, own only around four percent of land as compare to 95 percent of land in 1940s. Being poor in fertile soil, water minerals and oil, Israel's most important national assets are its human resources.29

Changes in Israeli Economy

Israeli economy is a fastest growing economy in West Asia mainly due to the enormous economic aid from America and highly advanced arms industry. Israeli agriculture has attracted a great deal of international attention and it has been the focus of Zionist ideology. The Zionists saw land settlement as one of the chief objectives of Jewish colonization and the state of Israel's governing policy centered chiefly on the attainment of self sufficiency in food stuffs in view of military considerations and Israel's possible isolation from its chief foreign food supplies. A special feature of Israel's agriculture is its co-operative settlement, which has been developed to meet the special needs and challenges encountered by the farming community. Two basic forms of Israeli co-operative settlements are Moshav and Kibbutz. The Moshav is a co-operative small holder's village. Individual farm in any one village are of equal size and every farmer works his own land to the best of his ability. He is responsible for his own farm, but his economic and social security is guaranteed by the co-operative structure of the village which handles the marketing of the products, purchases, and farming equipment and provides farmers with credit and many other services.30 In 2001, 3.0% of the total population, that is around 1,96,400 people, inhabited in 452

Moshavim. The Kibbutz is a unique form of collective settlement developed in Israel. It is based on common ownership of resources and on the pooling of labour, income and expenditure. Every member is expected to work and paid for no wages which is supplied by the Kibbuz with all necessary goods and services. Now the Kibutzim moment also underwent a change due to the liberalization policies where members are paid for their jobs and allotted private owning. In 2001, 1.8% of total population (some 1,15,500 people) was living in 268 Kibbutzim.  

Change in Israeli economy has taken place from the early emphasis on agriculture to a diversified industrial economy and now towards an economy based on service, research and high technology. Between 1965 and 1984, proportion of employed men working in agriculture dropped from 13 to 5 percent and the proportion in scientific, academic and professional occupations doubled from 9 to 18 percent.  The country's various ethnic and religious groups have not shared in equally in this occupational shift. Lowest in occupations and generally backward socio-economic status has become the fate of Arab population, with relatively high proportions working in construction, agriculture and menial jobs. The escalating defense expenditure and incurred cost of imports had escalated country's debt to $21.5 billion which represented highest per capita debt in the world in 1982. Despite inflation, however, real income has typically risen in recent years. However, Israel has been turning to a liberalized economy, a move considered contrary to the Zionist ideology. The recent Arab-Israeli conflict has aggravated Israel's economic crisis and the unemployment rate increased heavily from 8.9% in 1999 to 9.3% in 2001, to 10.3% in 2002 and to 11% in 2003.

ETHNICITY, CLASS AND POLITICS

Ethnic separation among Jews had begun with their dispersion. During the diasporic time the Jews across the world had only minimal contact with one another. With the immigration of Jews to Palestine, ethnic differences started to generate tensions. Up to eleventh century, most Jews lived in and around the areas in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. The Jewish population shot up in Europe in the medieval period and they were virtually cut off from the Jews living in Asia and African countries. The conflict

32 Yair Aharoni, The Political Economy of Israel, p. 98 (note-30).
and strained relations between Ashkenazim and Mizrachim started much before the formation of Israel in Yishuv. One of the Yemenite leader complained at the 18th Zionist Congress in 1933 that the "member of his community were still second class citizens in Palestine like non-Aryans in Germany."

Initially the Zionists rejected the concept of ethnicity in Israel and tried to uphold "one nation" theory and the cultural diversity were perceived as a threat to the existence of the Israeli state. The pioneers mostly European Jews conveniently sidelined the diversities of any forms and regarded that the notion of cultural differences or ethnicity is antithetical to the idea of Zionism and as a threat to the stability of Israeli state. However the mass immigration of Mizrachi Jews in the 1950s posed a great challenge to the Zionist idea. The European Jews considered Mizrachi immigration from Asia and Africa as a serious challenge to the hegemony of the Eurocentric Zionism. The elite Ashkenazim feared that the "backward" Mizrahim would dilute the western culture and jeopardize the stability of the newly founded state. Initially the Zionist leaders gave preference for "qualitative" immigrant from Europe and America (Anglophone countries) due to the fears of "backward" immigration from Asia - Africa. There was a sharp debate between the Zionist leaders with regard to the "quality of immigrants" and the dangers of bringing backward Mizrahim to Israeli.

Moshe Shertok (Sharett), former head of Jewish Agency and a sharp critic of Mizrachi immigration said that:

There is a big question not only of quantity, but also of quality. What does it mean to bring at once several hundred of thousand Jews from the Levant to Eretz Israel, as they are, not as we would like to see them after education and acculturation? We have to approach the issue of American Jews differently. We have to recruit this reservoir and demand from them essential large scale immigration.

The Mizrachim were not Israel's first choice but there was no other alternative than to accept them. The Ashkenazi immigrants came only in small numbers due to the

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extermination of around 6 million Jews and ban on immigration from USSR. Further there was unwillingness of Jews from the western world to immigrate to Israel despite the pressure from the Jewish Agency. The Zionist leaders later changed their position in order to satisfy the economic, demographic and military needs of the newly created state with its Ashkenazi elite. Finally the Israeli government committed to the open door policy since it needed many people to populate towns and lands occupied from Arabs, to increase the armed forces, to expand economy and to match with the Palestinian-Arab population.37

The absorption and assimilation were the two important policies of Zionists after the formation of Israel. The immigrants came to Israel with different norms, culture, values and life styles. The absorbing society exhibited a differential treatment in accepting them. The absorption of the migrants was comparatively smooth but later, integration was very difficult for the Zionists to attain. The "amalgamation of exiles" was not performed in equal terms. The Ashkenazi immigrants were perceived as potential full partners and great pains were taken to settle them and to open opportunities for them. On the contrary, the Mizrahi Jews were looked up as the people of the desert who needed to go through the process of education, reconciliation and cultural change to become part of the society.38 The outcome of this approach was the marginalization of Mizrahi in the cultural sphere and the discrimination against them in the economic sphere.

The majority of the European immigrants assimilated more smoothly and successfully than the Mizrahi due to their connections with the establishment and the active support from the state. The Mizrahi were forced to forsake their diasporic values, customs and traditions. They had to leave their culture, their songs, their music, and their rituals. The policy was not "absorption through acceptance" but "absorption through rejection". The Ashkenazi tried to impose the European culture and life style on the immigrants and depicted the Oriental culture as backward and unworthy.

In 1960s, Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, warned that:

Those from Morocco had no education. Their customs are those of Arabs. They love their wives but they beat them. May be in the third generation something will appear from the oriental Jew that is little different. But I do not see it yet. The Moroccan Jew took a lot from Moroccan Arabs. The culture of Morocco I would not like to have here. And I do not see what contribution present Persians have to make.39

The main focus of national-building perspective was modernism and technological development which were totally alien to the immigrants from Asia and Africa. The primary goal of the absorption policies was to make immigrants instrumental for obtaining national objectives and their integration was only a secondary matter. The Israeli establishment expected that the immigrants would adopt socially and culturally in accordance with the European culture and principles. Efforts were made to curtail the traditional ways of their life that Mizrahim brought with them and they were directed to reduce the excessive rites and rituals which have “pagan influence”. In the beginning the Mizrahim relinquished their old traditions and heritage hoping that their submission would lead to the eventual acquisition of full and equal status and participation in the new society.

The two ethnic groups were also different in their structural characteristics. The level of education of Mizrahim was on the whole lower than the European immigrants. Most of them arrived in Israel without proper professional education and they lacked technical skills in modern occupations and stayed at the lower levels of economic sphere. Their family was large and they had few relatives and acquaintances among old timers or veterans which the Ashkenazim enjoyed. The housing, food, and employment were secured through patronage and political connections and the Mizrahim found themselves at a disadvantage as compared to the Ashkenazim. The new Ashkenazim who had a better connection with old timers have succeeded in establishing themselves successfully in the new society. On the other hand, the Mizrahim who were less influential remained dependent upon the absorbing institutions. The Mizrahim were considered weak and incompetent to perform major roles in the society. The Mizrahim immigrants were enlisted to relive the immediate state problems. They were culturally

repressed against in the allocation of services and resources and exploited as a channel for collective social mobility of Ashkenazim.

Many of the immigrants from Asia and Africa were put in transit camps (Ma'abarot). The living conditions of Maabarot were quite different and they had to stay there for a long time. The dispersion of Mizrachim in desert and remote areas was a major blow to their quick integration. In 1953, 40,000 pupils studied in high schools and professional and agricultural schools and among then only 2000 students were of Mizrachim origin. During the 1950s, illiteracy among Mizrahim was ten times as high as Ashkenazim where majority of adults from Asia and African countries immigrated to Israel without schooling. In 1963, only 12% of total students studied in university were Mizrachim, and those studying for their masters' degree were 4%. At the same time, marginal tendency on educational spending was lower amongst Mizrachim as compare to Ashkenazim. There was some decline in educational gap by 1980s. The percentage of Mizrachim in higher education was one fourth of Ashkenazim in 1970s. In 1974, the admission standard for high school entrance was lowered for Mizraimh so as to decrease the ethnic divide between the two ethnic groups.

Majority of the development towns and Moshavs were totally isolated from the mainstream Israeli society. The Mizrachim who had neither practical nor ideological training for agriculture were forced to reside in the agricultural settlements or Moshavs. Ironically, houses were allocated to Mizrachim without taking into account the number of dependents. The Mizrahim who had large families were allotted small rooms and in 1960s, 60 percent of Mizrahim had five or more than five persons per room. At the same time, special concessions were given to Eastern Europe immigrants. They were exempted from customs and income tax, social security for aged and reservation for jobs. They were allotted apartments which were purchased from local contractors at the costs of the rehabilitation of Mizrahim living in the Maabarot for many months.

Most of the Mizrahim were dependent on the Ashkenazim or Ashkenazim controlled institutions. They came with little capital and had no relatives to return to. By the end

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41 Ibid, p. 176.
42 Shlomo Swirski, Israel, p. 19, (note-19).
of 1960s, most of the Mizrachim were dispersed to the development towns and Moshavos where they become manual labourers in an economy dominated by Ashkenazim. In the late 1950s, Mizrachim comprised 75 percent of the work force in menial jobs like construction workers, waiters, cleaners, gardeners, drainage and sanitation worker, maids and petty clerks. According to the 1961s census, 41% of workers in textile plants were Mizrahim. At the same time, managerial and high ranking positions in the economic sphere were in the hands of Ashkenazi. It has been suggested by Shlomo Swirski, a noted Israeli radical sociologist, that the immigrants from Asia and Africa became industrial proletariat along with Arabs due to the Ashkenazi domination. Agriculture laborers recorded the lowest wages in the country and wages of female labourers who did most of the picking and packing were relatively low.\(^{43}\)

The educational achievement, occupational mobility and the standard of living of the Mizrachim is very low compared to the Ashkenazim. The unilateral geographical dispersion policy of Israel has further isolated the underprivileged Mizrachim community from the mainstream society. The Mizrachims were mostly allotted the deserted peripheries and frontiers which lacked proper infrastructure and civic facilities. By 1960s, most of development towns quickly became dominated by low-income and low-skilled Mizrachi populations. According to the 1966 (CBS) census, Mizrachi representation in the development towns were: Shlomi-(98.5), Ma'a lot (97.2), Hatzor (97.0), Beit She' an (85.2), Netivot (99.0), Kiryat Shemone (78.7), Ofakim (97.1), Sderot (95.0), Kiriyat Malaachi (94.3) and so on.\(^{44}\) The rural schools were almost isolated from the core, provided low quality educational services, and lacked adequate facilities. A high proportion of the teachers were unqualified, had incomplete curricula and had an alienated and sometimes even conflicting teachers-parents relationship. These conditions resulted in low educational achievements of the Mizrachim students. Moreover, the Mizrachim community is underrepresented in masters, medical sciences, engineering, Doctoral studies, Hi-Tech, mathematical and research. In late 1960s, the government has lowered the standard of the lower schools to accommodate Mizrachim community and most of them were enrolled in the

\(^{43}\) Ibid, p. 22.
vocational programmes like agricultural schools. Only an average of 30.6 percent of youth in isolated Mizrachi neighbourhoods and developments towns matriculated in 1989 as compared to an average of 50.5 percent elsewhere in urban Jewish Israel. The lack of proper education and the inaccessibility to the “seat of power” has affected the economic stability of the immigrants from Asian and African countries to a great extent. The Mizrahim are mostly engaged in blue collar jobs like drivers, mechanics, factory workers, security, cleaners, domestic helpers, salesclerks, kindergarten teachers, sales men/women, construction labours and so on. Similarly, unemployment rates over the years have been almost twice as high in the Israel’s Mizrachi dominated peripheral areas as compared to the national average, reaching, for example, 16% in Ofakim, 12% in Yeroham, 14% in Beersheba, and 11% in Kiryat Gat and Neivot in July 1996 as compared to a national average of 6.5%.

Israeli establishment gradually succeeded in imposing western culture of Ashkenazi in the Israeli society. Till the late 1980s, the Israeli school syllabus emphasized Ashkenazi history with extensive courses in European history and literature. Later the Mizrahim leaders demanded that along with the memories of holocaust survivors, the suffering of Mizrachi Jews at the hands of the Arabs should also be mentioned. In contrary, the Jews were safe and secure in Asia and Africa countries especially in Islamic countries compare to European Christendom. From the view point of European elite, cultural imperfectness was highly associated among the Mizrahim Jew. The renowned scholar Raphael Patai has catalogued a host of negative stereotypes projected by the Ashkenazi against the Jews from Asia and Africa. These includes, among others, instability, emotionalism, impulsiveness, unreliability, incompetence, habitual lying, cheating, laziness, boastfulness, inclination to violence, uncontrolled temper, given to superstitions, and lack of cleanliness. The Zionists were very much concerned about "Levantinization", which in other words would mean that the cultural deficiencies of Mizrahim would pollute the Jewish state.

Arnold Lewis has suggested that the inferior and backward status of Mizrahim is the end result of culturally disadvantaged approach and institutionally discriminating perspectives of the Israeli State. The Ashkenazim elite demanded that Mizrahim are in

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need of socialization before they can assume their rightful place as full citizens, contributors and benefactors of the Israeli society. From this viewpoint, the inferior status of the Jews from Asia and African countries rest in the lifestyle and backwardness which they brought from the "East". According to Shlomo Swirski, the marginalization of the Mizrahi is an end product of the discriminatory practices carried out by the public or the governmental institutions dominated by the European Jewry. The prejudice and negative attitude of the officials failed to create equilibrium in the integration process of the Mizrahi.47

During the first two and half decades of the state of Israel, the sociological discourse has been dominated by the functionalist agenda. This perspective moved in tandem with the Zionist vision of society with one language, one culture and one society and it denies the heterogeneous nature of the Israeli society divided along ethnic, religious, national and citizenship lines. The Functionalist theory demands the need for political and cultural assimilation of the Mizrahi in the given framework i.e. to shut the original diasporic identity and to re-socialize them into the dominant western culture. The new comers are expected to discard their cultural heritage and ties with their country of origin and to completely assimilate into their new society. It is assumed that both immigrants and established residents share the goal of mutual assimilation and that societal cohesion is based on cultural homogeneity. The Israeli state always ascribes cultural homogeneity and reluctantly recognizes the ethnic traditions and cultures. The functionalist-modernization approach was within the framework of American melting pot theory as the object was to dissolve the Oriental culture in the European melting pot.

Subsequently in the 1970s, the second generation or the new generation of Mizrahi origin had questioned the homogenous nature of Israeli society. From the mid 1960s to the early 1970s "the disparity" (Hapaar) was one of the foremost public issues in Israel and a main focus of its sociological discourse.48 The alternative perspectives emerged in the 1970s in the context of growing discontent of Mizrahi with the dominant western culture of Israel. The first major challenge to the absorption approach came

from Sammy Smooha. The pluralist acknowledgement of the fundamental heterogeneity of Israeli society, its conceptualization of the inter-group hierarchy, its discerning of different modes of incorporation, and its recognition of the inherent conflict potential— all these have released Israeli sociology from the unwarranted unitary image imposed on it by the functionalist school.

Smooha singled out three sets of inter-group relations in Israeli society: the intra-Jewish ethnic set, the intra-Jewish cultural set, and the international-Jewish Arab set. Moreover, he tries to analyze the diversification of the Israeli society by outlining three distinct modes of incorporation: “the Mizrachim are not separate but unequal, the religious Jews are separate and equal, and the Israeli Arabs are separate and equal”. The Mizrachim-Ashkenazi set of relations is defined as a “dynamic paternalism-co-optation” mode of incorporation in which the Mizrachim are perceived as an assimilating non-dominant majority. This theory maintains that while Mizrachim are indeed being integrated into the Israeli society, they are still under privileged within it. The Mizrachim were never a group partners in the policies of state building but were merely immigrants in a process of integration and adaptation due to Ashkenazi dominance and cultural hegemony. In Smooha’s view, “there has been an ongoing transition to a liberal competitive system where the Mizrachim can freely enter the competition with fellow Ashkenazim but tend to loose out because of inferior skills and informal discrimination”.

Moreover, for radical Israeli sociologist Shlomo Swirski, the Israeli society is composed of two classes: a managerial Ashkenazi class and Mizrachi working class. The Labor movement is the movement of dominant class and not of the actual working class. He argues that the prevalent ideology in Israel envisaging scattered communities of Jews coming together in unity and brotherhood only serves to mask the monopoly of the Ashkenazi elites. The Asio-African Jews were dependent for work, housing, finance and social services on institutions dominated by Ashkenazim-private industry, the government, the Histadrut and the Jewish Agency. The policies and administration of these institutions served to reinforce the privileged positions of the European Jews and the inferior position of both Mizrachim and Palestinians. The political institutions

49 Ibid, pp. 105-6.
50 Ibid. p. 79.
51 Shlomo Swirski, Israel, pp. 10-11, (note-19).
played an important part in the ethnic division of labor, not so much because they were manned by Europeans, but because their desire to encourage investment and production led them to aid and support the owners and controllers of capital who were mostly Ashkenazim.

In 1970s the Mizrahim launched "Black Panthers Movement" which challenged the dominant Western ideology and culture and emphasized Mizrahim values and identity. This was the follow up of Wadi Salib uprising which broke out in 1959. The Black Panthers insisted that "we are protesting for our rights to be like all the citizens of the state". A society preoccupied with the occupation of Palestinians and external conflicts was made aware of the serious unrest in the society. Until then the Israeli Ashkenazi elite never took ethnic tensions seriously. The Black Panthers demands included stopping all discriminatory practices against Mizrahim, to root out poverty, to clear slums, drastic improvements in educational opportunities for Mizrahim children. The movement achieved world wide attention after the violent demonstrations in Jerusalem on May 1971. The Panthers engendered widespread anxiety and resentment among the broader Ashkenazi public and they felt threatened by the rebel’s demands. Though Black Panthers failed to achieve anything substantial but they successfully sensitized the Israeli society about the unequal socio-economic relations in the Israeli society. The Panthers collapsed due to the lack of political experience and organization skills. Though the movement vanished, the resentment continues to this day. In mid 1970s, the Likud party came to power due to the en masse support of Mizrahim. The mass support of Mizrahim to Likud could be termed as a protest vote against the feeling of deprivation, frustration and helplessness.

At the same time political integration of the Mizrahim was very slow when compared to Ashkenazim. Until 1970s, the political participation of the Mizrahim was very limited due to various aspects. Upon their arrival to Israel some of the Mizrahim were sent to development towns and Moshavim away from the mainstream cities. The demographic isolation perhaps hampered the politicization of the Mizrahim to a great extent. The Oriental Jews were neither involved nor aware about political activities outside their respective settlements. The Ashkenazi elites allege that the immigrants

from the Asian and African countries including India did not have any previous experience in the political and democratic process. On the other hand, the veterans or the early settlers did not take much initiative to politicize the Mizrahpim.

In 1973, Mapai had 12,500 memberships in Beersheba, a development town dominated by Yemenites, Indians and Moroccans. But, very few were aware of the ideology or the policies of the Mapai. In the family feuds and neighborhood rivalries among the immigrants were used by the political parties rather than involving the immigrants in the political process. Interestingly, the party branches in the peripheries were not fully involved in the decision making process until 1970s. The Ashkenazi immigrants were politically more active than the Mizrahips. Moreover, most of the party leaders were of Ashkenazi origin. In 1972, only 25% of the Mapai central committee was of Mizrahi origin and in 1975, the Labor party central committee had 123 Mizrahi members out of a total of 577. Moreover in the party bureau of the Labor there were only three Mizrahi members out of 29. The collapse of the Ashkenazi led Labor bloc and the sudden victory of Likud have raised the morale and self confidence of the Mizrahips to a great extent. In the beginning of 1980s certain Mizrahi activist started a movement named “Tent Movement” and it speaks of the discriminatory attitudes towards Mizrahi in the areas of housing, education, wages, culture and political representation and so on. The movement leaders also explicitly contrasted the distress in poor neighborhoods and development towns with the investment of billions of dollars by the Begin led Likud government in the new Ashkenazi settlements in the occupied territories. In 1981, the Tent movement led to the formation of the Mizrahi party named Tami headed by Mizrahi politicians like Aharon Uzhan, Aharon Abuhatzera and so on. But the Tami Party failed in few years since they did not offer any concrete alternative to the Ashkenazi-Zionist hegemony. In 1988 another Mizrahi party emerged named Shas led by Rabbi Ovadia Yosef from the ground prepared by Tami. Unlike Tami the Shas were more concerned with religion and its political action was centered on the Mizrahi synagogues and Yeshivas. Shas sees itself as a Mizrahi revolution and propagated the

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54 Ibid., p. 128.
idea that the secular Ashkenazi movement as a whole is responsible for the Mizrahim's inferior social status and for their separation from religion and tradition of earlier generations. In 1997, a radical Mizrachi group was formed by certain eminent academicians called “Hakeshet Hademokratit Hamizrahit” or Mizrachi Democratic Rainbow Coalition. Unlike Black Panthers and tent Movements the Mizrachi Democratic Rainbow Coalition articulated themselves forcefully and fluently in the press as well as in the academy both in Israel and abroad.56

The Likud party although did not succeeded in eliminating economic differences, it did succeed in raising the self esteem of Mizrahim. Since 1977 the society witnessed the revival of ethnic festivals and diasporic traditions. The Likud Party continued a policy of fostering traditional values and cultural heritages and succeeded in creating euphoria among the Mizrahim about their diasporic past and history. Gradually the Mizrahim have integrated into the Ashkenazi culture. Many Mizrahim of both second and third generation are getting enrolled in higher education. The nuclear type family system has replaced the patriarchal extended family of Mizrahim Jews. A large proportion of Mizrahim women have entered into the job market. The education gap between school generation Mizrahim and Ashkenazim Jews have narrowed down in recent times but the representation of Mizrahim in the levels such as Postgraduates, Doctors, Scientists, and Academics is very minimal. At the same time, earning gaps between the Ashkenazim and Mizrahim not only failed to converge but also widened between 1975 to 1995.57 According Yinon Cohen, the main reason for this is the rising inequality in earnings of the Mizrahim and Ashkenazim. Moreover even today Israeli employers prefer Ashkenazim over Mizrahim and this preference has intensified over time which is leading to the low socio-economic status of the Mizrahim working class. The globalization process and the collapse of the Israeli agricultural system has lowered the socio-economic positions of the Mizrahim as most of the uneducated farmers had no other options but to accept low paid jobs like security guards, drivers, gardeners, mechanics, cleaners, and so on.58

56 Ibid, p. 61.
COCHIN JEWs IN ISRAEL

The Cochin Jews were not very much aware of the Zionist activities until their immigration to Israel. However in 1904, one of the Paradesi Jews had written a letter to Theodore Herzl expressing their support and solidarity with the Zionist movement. But there was hardly any vibrant Zionist organization in Cochin, and the Zionist activities were heightened only after the formation of Israel. The Zionist understanding of Cochinis cannot be considered as political Zionism, rather it could be termed as Messianic Zionism (i.e. the age-old Jewish tradition of belief that the Messianic Era that will bring ultimate release from exile, the return to Zion, the rebuilding of the holy temple). The reasons for the Jewish migration were highly complex and the Zionist call to build the so-called “Eretz Israel” cannot be taken as the main reason for their migration. The Zionist call and the formation of Israel was a “blessing in disguise” for the Malabaree Jews. The great majority of Malabaree Jews were highly dependent on the synagogue income for their subsistence.

The problems of the immigration and the integration of Cochin Jews cannot be understood in isolation but only in their wider context of the category of Oriental Jews. Upon their arrival, they were sent to Mabaarot or immigration camp and they stayed there for a longer period unlike other Ashkenazi groups. From there, some went to various kibbutzim, such as kibbutz Yakov and kibbutz Givathayim. The Jews of Cochin were very religious and strict about dietary laws, were ignorant of the secular, non-kosher, socialistic way of life and European-oriented members on the kibbutzim were alien to the Cochinis habits and beliefs. One of the motivations for the immigration was to practice the religion in the “Holy Land” in a free and fair manner. But the westernized way of life in the kibbutzim was very foreign to the Cochinis and they left the kibbutz within a few months demanding better accommodation, as their life in these centers was very hard and non-religious.

60 Gilbert Kushner, Immigrants from India in Israel, p. 21, (note-15).
61 Gilbert Kushner, Immigrants from India in Israel, p. 67, (note-93).
Later the settlement authorities had arbitrarily allotted various isolated Moshavs in Negev desert and borders to Cochinis like - Nevatim, Kefar Yuval, Mesillat Zion, Tao'z, Aviezer, Givat hayim, Moshav Ofer, Rekhatzim and Moshav Shaheer. Unlike Bene Israelis, very few Cochinis settled in development towns. The earlier settlers abandoned most of these moshavs allotted to Cochinis due to the shortage of water and low fertility. Unlike Bene Israelis, very few Cochinis settled in development towns. The earlier settlers abandoned most of these moshavs allotted to Cochinis due to the shortage of water and low fertility. In Israel the Mizrachi groups like Cochinis were spatially marginalized by the Israeli settlement projects, whether in the isolated periphery or in poor and stigmatized neighborhoods of Israel’s major cities. This has limited Cochin Jewry’s potential economic, social and cultural participation.

In the beginning, life was very hard and they suffered a lot in the new environment. Initially, they struggled very hard due to many aspects such as language, lack of proper infrastructure, culture, climatic conditions, geographical isolation, racial discrimination, low paid jobs, and so on. They were not very fluent in Hebrew due to the lack of rabbinical schools or Hebrew centers in Cochin. Until the 1970s, the Jews of Cochin communicated in Malayalam, and even today many elderly Cochinis cannot converse fluently in Hebrew. Moreover, most of the Cochin Moshav were in isolated regions and the scope of interaction with the other Jewish groups was very limited. The settlement authorities suspected that the Jews of Cochin carried contagious diseases and they were forced to settle in remote areas. Most of the Cochin Moshav never had proper water supply and electricity in the beginning. One of the Cochin settlements, Kefar Yuval is in the Israeli Lebanon border, and they had horrific life due to the enemy raids from Lebanon. In late 1970s, the terrorists have attacked the Moshav and around ten Cochinis got killed.

Secondly, the Cochin Jews were not familiar with the difficult modern agricultural techniques because in Cochin most of them were peddlers, petty traders and craftsmen.

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Most of the Cochini Moshavs were barren lands, and earlier immigrants left it as the land was rough and barren. The Cochin Jews suffered initially as the modern agriculture techniques of Israel were alien to the newcomers and the Jews of Cochin began their agricultural training as complete novices. For the first fifteen to eighteen years, the Cochin Jews were mostly agricultural or construction labourers with low wages. The elders and women were also forced to work in spite of their weak physical conditions. Around fifteen Cochinis died in Alma in the first two years due to the unbearable winter. This was a remote settlement in the northern side of the Galilee. Moreover, the dry climate of the Negev Desert also affected the Cochinis who were staying in Nevatim. Almost all the Cochini Moshavs were totally isolated from the main cities and horse cart was the major mode of transportation for many years. Initially, the “madrichi”, or instructors, found it very difficult to manage the Cochini Moshavs due to their inability to adapt to the new life. These instructors complained that the villagers did not take care of their land, never took care of growing vegetables, and harvested late. Moreover, the pre-1970s economic recession and political turmoil in Israel also affected the social and economic development of the Cochinis. The Cochinis alleged that instructors paid very low wages to Cochin Jews despite their hard labour.

However, the integration process of the Cochinis was very slow when compared to other immigrants. The geographical isolation, financial difficulties and the discriminatory policies of the government have hampered the educational attainment of the Cochin Jews. Most of the Cochin Jews have completed certificate programme from the Agricultural schools, and education level of the women is very low. The educational attainment of the Cochinis is very low when compared to other immigrant groups. The economic recession of mid 1980s and the collapse of the agricultural sector have once again lowered the standard of living of the Cochin Jews. With the collapse of the agricultural sector, the less educated Cochin Jews who were mainly

64 Emanuel Shimoni, “Cochin Jews build a village”, Jewish Frontier, June 1959, p. 16.
engaged in farming had no other options but to join the low paid jobs like driver, security, gardener, mechanics, salesman and so on. The representation of the Cochinis in higher education, professional programmes, hightech, business and even in politics is very minimal.

The Cochin Jews is a socially marginalized community in Israel having minimal interaction with the mainstream Ashkenazim community. The European Jews considered Indian Jews as under developed and primitive. They were often abused as “choklate kiddies”. The Cochin Jews often faced uncomfortable questions with regard to their Jewishness. For nearly three decades the intra-ethnic marriages was widely prevalent among the Cochinis due to the lack of social interaction with other Jewish groups. However in spite of the immigration to Israel, the prejudice and animosity among both Pardesis and Malabarees continues though not in an explicit manner. The Cochin Jews were a highly orthodox community with various diaspora rituals and rites. Upon their arrival, the Cochinis continued their tradition for some time, but they later realized the disadvantage of these traditions when there was a great uproar against the Bene Israelis of Bombay by the orthodox rabbi alleging that they were not Jews. In addition, the Paradesi Jews of Cochin never accepted the Malabaree Cochin Jews and branded them as impure due to the influence of Hindu traditions.

However, the rise of Mizrachi movements, the decline of the Ashkenazi dominated Labor bloc and the reassertion of the Mizrachim groups had its impact on Cochin Jews also. The tales of saints and tombs as holy places and sources of miracles were quite familiar and deep-rooted within the Oriental Jewish communities. For the Cochini Jews, the 25th day of the Hebrew month Kislev, which also is the first day of Hanukah, was celebrated as the memorial day of Rabbi Nahamia Motta named Choruda. Rabbi Motta, a Yemenite was a great Jewish poet who settled and died in Cochin. It is believed that he performed many miracles and his grave is described as “a Mecca not only for Jews but also for Hindus and Christians.” The memorial ceremony of Nahamia Motta was called Choruda, or Oath (in English).

Cochnis did not celebrate this festival explicitly fearing that they will be socially marginalized. However, by late 1970s the tomb worships and cult festivals have reemerged in Israel like Hilluloth of Moroccans and Mimonuah of Iranians. The Cochin Jewry has more than five ethnic organizations and they conduct various activities and congregate regularly. Moreover, the amount of Cochinis visiting India is increasing rapidly and some are even planning to buy lands in kerala to build houses. It seems today the Cochinis are trying to revive their heritage and culture which they had once ignored to attain the status and acceptance in the Israeli society.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This work is conceptualized within the framework of colonial perspective. Colonization can be defined as the conquest and control of other people’s land and goods. Earlier Colonialisms were the pre-capitalist, however modern colonialism was established alongside capitalism in Western Europe. Anne Mc Clintock defines colonialism as direct territorial appropriation of other’s political entity combined with forthright exploitation of its resources and labour and systematic interference in the capacity of the appropriated culture to organize its dispensations of power. Currently Israel, Australia, New Zealand and to some extent Canada represents this kind of colonialism. The inevitable outcome of colonialism with regard to the attitude of the colonizer towards the colonized is racism. As Albert Memmi explains, racism appears then, not as an incidental, but as a consubstantial part of colonialism. Racism is the highest expression of the colonial system and one of the most significant features of the colonialism.

The end of the Cold War was one of the main factors in the acceleration of internal ethnic conflicts within states. Over the recent past twenty years or so the world has witnessed the increasing organization and articulation of particularistic identities, values and interests. The diversification of various group interests and identification, as what some scholars have explained, is a new, complex challenge to the nation state. Ethnic groups of all kinds have mobilized themselves and mastered the means of

69 ibid, p. 89
70 Albert Memmi, “From Colonialism to Racism (review),” Journal for Palestine Studies, Vol. 10, no. 4, summer 1981, pp. 175-176.
making their interests publicly known, a wide spread phenomenon often phrased as "politics of difference" or "identity politics". Economic and political restructurings and the forms of inequality associated with them have stimulated or deepened a consciousness of differential interests and identities of heterogeneity rather than homogeneity. In fact, the globalization has strengthened rather than weakened ethnic identities and widened the gap between rich and poor.

However, immigration flows are thought to be one of the major sources for the development of ethnic conflict. These flows may be caused by ethnic conflict in the country of origin or by economic reasons, but they may also generate a new conflict with other groups in the receiving society. Such conflict becomes significant when immigrants use their group boundaries as a means for collective action or as an instrument for social and political mobilization. Immigration also may affect the power system in the receiving society by altering its ethno-demographic structure. At the same time newcomers may increase the competition for available resources and in turn, raise the conflicting potential between themselves and other competitive local groups. However immigration is also synonymous with ethnic diversity, which is an increasingly recognized dimension of the political, cultural and social policies of countries all over the world. These challenges have led to the rise of multiculturalism as both an indicator of social structure and as a concept.

In order to understand the ethnic formation and integration process of Cochin Jews, it is important to discuss the definition of "ethnic group". Migration, religious diversification, racial differences and presence of different speech communities in one place all lead to the multiplicity of self-identities which we come to call "ethnicity". One of the most widely cited definitions of ethnic group is that of Schermerhorn:

An ethnic group is defined as a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historic past and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their people hood. Examples of such symbolic elements are: kinship

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72 Majid Al Haj, Immigration and Ethnic Formation in a Deeply Divided Society, p. 20, (note-21).
patterns, physical contiguity, religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, or nationality.\textsuperscript{74}

Anthony Smith defines "ethnies" (ethnic communities) "as named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity." He connects the association with a "specific territory" to the basic elements of ethnic affiliation. This consciousness of shared origin is of primary importance for the creation of an "inclusive group".\textsuperscript{75}

It is very important to focus on the immigrant’s ethnic identity and cultural orientation of the period of time. A key question in this context is whether immigrants discard their original ethnic identity in favour of that of host society or reconstruct their own ethnocultural boundaries.

Immigrants and sojourners are often faced with a conflict between the desire to preserve their former identities and the wish to develop a "new" identity more consistent with the expectations and modes of behavior of host nationals. The migrants are often faced with two major questions: (a) whether to maintain their ethnic and cultural identity and (b) whether to develop closer relations with members of the host society and adopt some of their values and norms of behavior. The immigrants adopt different strategies to tackle the crisis: (a) Separation, a wish to retain the previous cultural identity and refrain from close interaction with the new culture, (b) Integration, a balance between maintaining the original identity and interacting with the new culture and adopting some of its ways, (c) Assimilation, about disowning a great part of the old identity and adopting a new life style, and (d) marginalization, a lack of interest or ability either to retain previous identity or to develop a new one.\textsuperscript{76}

\textit{Assimilation} reflects a strong orientation by immigrants to adopt the majority’s values and relinquish their ties with their former culture. \textit{Marginality} refers to individuals who


are caught between two different cultures and are unable to build a new identity that reconciles the values of both cultures. Their mobility to adjust to the intercultural situation often results in their rejection of both cultures, in their rejection by members of both cultures and in their withdrawal from situation that raises cultural identification anxieties. However, segregation or *separation*, features strong allegiance to the original culture and aloofness from the new culture.\(^\text{77}\)

On the other hand, *integration* involves identification with and adopting of components of both the original and new cultures. Scholars like Ward and Kennedy suggests that strategy of integration would be more closely associated than other strategies with better adjustment, because integration reflects a balance between retaining one's traditional cultural identity and accepting new cultural values.\(^\text{78}\) Integration is conceptualized as a particular mode of adaptation in which certain aspects of new culture and social relations with the members of the host society are added on to the immigrant's traditional culture and social networks without replacing or modifying any significant post of the old. Hurh and Kim describe integration as "pattern of adjustment programme" in which immigrants acquire new components of the culture of the host society while maintaining the core of their own culture.\(^\text{79}\)

The relationship between ethnic solidarity (cohesion) among immigrants and the extent of their adjustment to the host society is a controversial issue. It has been stressed that ethnic identity is not always an asset and it can even pose as a burden for disadvantaged groups in complex and multi ethnic societies. Some scholars maintain just the contrary view and argue that the formation of a cohesive ethnic community among immigration may facilitate their adjustment in different sphere.\(^\text{80}\) In a study about the "survival technique" of Hutterites in the United States, Eaton concludes that strong communal

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organization contributed to this group’s adjustment to American society at the individual and the group levels. The community support will enable the ethnic groups to experience a slow process of integration without the social crisis that is usually experienced by minorities and immigrants that make a sudden shift from their original social structure, norms and value to those of the host society. As ethnic groups abandon their home countries and town of origin they carry with them a world view, a life style, a language, a family structure that they try to maintain in the host country. For as long as they maintain their cultural markers and other symbolic components of their identity, they seem to muster the energy and courage needed to adopt and survive.

Another major issue in an immigrant society is the key question with regard to the relationship between length of time in the new country and ethnic formation among immigrants. Sociologists like Castels and Miller hold that the outcome of ethnic formation depends on the reaction of the state and the host society. Openness and acceptance of diversity drives immigrant toward the formation of ethnic communities that become an integral part of a social structure. On the other hand, denial and rejection of cultural diversity leads immigrants toward the formation of suppressed-ethnic minorities. They conclude that ethnic consciousness does not disappear so that in some conditions there may be resurgence of ethnicity despite acculturation. Despite forced assimilation as reflected in the abandonment of the ethnic mother tongue and many other patterns of behavior, the children of the immigrants continue to remain acutely conscious of their ethnic identity.

Similarly, “ethnic heritage”, including the ethnic mother tongue, usually ceases to play any viable role in life of third generation. But scholars like Gans argues that ethnicity is symbolic, since groups are “less and less interested in their ethnic cultures and

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81 Ibid, p 337.
84 Ibid, p. 28.
organizations: instead they resort to the use of ethnic symbols”. According to Gans, symbolic ethnicity “is characterized by a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and a pride in a tradition which was forgotten for a long period. This type of ethnicity is "effortless" and it does not require functioning groups or networks.

It is very important to note that where national security plays a major role, the state and state elites have a crucial effect on ethnic boundaries, ethnic saliency and the external conflicts and wars definitely put strong impact on domestic ethnic relations. Smith argues that war has been a powerful factor in shaping crucial aspects of ethnic community and nationhood. The external conflicts have both direct and indirect implications on ethnic formation, identity and forms of mobilization. Protracted wars in particular are more likely to disseminate the sense of ethnic belonging and ethnic sentiment which elite capitalize for mass mobilization. The state of Israel has witnessed highest rate of ethnic revivalism and ethnic solidarity from 1993 to 2000 during the interim period of relative peace after the signing of Oslo Accord with the Palestinian people in 1993.

Israel is a colonial state and Israeli society is an oppressive social system. The colonial nature of Zionism takes various shapes. In essence Zionism was a white settler movement which conquered Palestine with the support of the imperialist forces like USA and Britain. Unlike other colonialisms Zionism has sought moral and historical justification for its activities in a religious doctrine i.e., Orthodox Judaism. Although most Israelis do not practice Orthodox Judaism, political Zionism found it appropriate to stress in its teachings certain concepts which exist in Orthodox Judaism in order to rally Jewish communities behind it. This aspect is perhaps most obvious with regard to Zionist-Israeli demographic conquest (i.e., organized mass immigration) of, and territorial expansion in Palestine. The belief in European supremacy, the economic and social benefit gained by the colonizer, and the role of Orthodox Judaism are the main factors which are interwoven into the Zionist/Israeli colonial fabric. Political
domination and territorial usurpation overrode economic exploitation in the Zionist colonization because the grand goal was to construct an exclusively Jewish community. At the same time, Israel is a deeply divided society where ethnicity and nationalism constitute basic social and cultural features and central elements in the stratification system. It is a dual system distributed on two levels between Jews and non-Jews and with internal clusters among the Jewish population determined by ethnicity, religious orientation and length of time in the country.

Ethnic relations are a central issue in Israeli sociological discourse and research since its unilateral formation. It is worth noting that ethnic relations in Israel are usually handled from one perspective only in which the Mizrachi communities (edot ha Mizrach) are the object of study. Based on the conception that the “ingathering of exiles would” eliminate ethnic diversities. Zionist paradigm rejects ethnicity as an ultimate reality. In this sense, the mass immigration of Mizrachim in the 1950s posed a real challenge to the Zionist idea. The mass immigration from Arab and Asian countries constituted a great challenge to the unquestioned authority of the European - Ashkenazi ethnocentric Zionism. Israeli sociologists like Smooha argued that the elite feared that “the backward” Orientals would dilute the western culture and upset the political democracy of the newly founded state.

Oren Yiftachel described Israeli system as “ethnocracy” or “ethnocratic regime”. An “ethnocracy” is a non-democratic regime which attempts to extend or preserve disproportional ethnic control over a contested multi-ethnic territory. It creates a structural and ideological apparatus which safeguards the rights and privileges of the “dominant ethnos” and excludes indigenous and minorities. Although the indigenous and minorities are granted some civil and political rights, the ethno-national character of the state determines allocation of resources and the borders of legitimacy. In the case of Israel, the Ashkenazi elite systematically operated a well organized apparatus through which it dominates Jewish society before and after the establishment of Israel. This apparatus can also be called the “system of exclusion”, through which the elite determined the nature and boundaries of the collective identity and thus the nature of

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legitimacy for each group. Ethnocracy develops chiefly when control over territory is challenged, and when a dominant group is powerful enough to determine unilaterally the nature of the state. Ethnocracy is thus an unstable regime with opposite forces of expansionism and resistant in constant conflict.

Certain specific features of ethnocracy are; firstly, the ethnocratic regimes are mostly “Settler societies” and the ethnicity determines the allocation of rights and privileges. Secondly, State borders and political boundaries are unclear and fuzzy mainly due to the role of ethnic Diasporas. Thirdly, a dominant “charter” ethnic group appropriates the state apparatus which determines most public policies and segregates itself from other groups. Fourthly, for the ethnocratic regimes the extra – territorial ethnic links are crucial for its existence. In the Israeli case, the Jewish Diaspora especially the Jews in USA is an indispensable aspect of the system. Finally, the ethnocratic system is usually supported by a cultural and ideological apparatus which legitimizes and reinforces the uneven reality. This is achieved by constructing a historical narrative which proclaims the dominant elites as the rightful owner of the territory. Moreover such narrative degrades all other contenders as historically not entitled or culturally unworthy to control the land or to capture authority.

According to this model, ethnic solidarity is the reaction of isolated periphery against exploitation by the centre. The group identity also emerges as a reaction to continuing discrimination and the cultural division of labor. When the dominant group seeks to stabilize its dominance and perpetuate the existing situation, the subordinate group attempts to change the distribution of resources to its advantage. The core group (centre) may utilize the state system in order to institutionalize its dominance. Indeed, several studies have found that the role of state is central in determining the salience of ethnicity and the outcome of immigrants or ethnic competition.

In ethnocracy, state has become more than a bureaucracy and turned into decision making body that largely determines legitimacy and thus the division of power among

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different sectors and groups. The power of the state over its citizens, both at the individual and group levels, has increased over time, giving the state more control over the mobilization of ethnicity at the center and periphery. The state may play an important role, explicit or implicit, in enhancing ethnic identity among ethnic groups as a means to assert its domination and control. Waters stressed that state citizenship policies can also play a decisive role in the ethnic orientation of minority groups. The government’s direct or indirect recognition of ethnicity as a legitimate basis for political organization perpetuates ethnic divisions and promotes form of ethnic mobilization for previously unrecognized groups. In addition, Horowitz argues that there is an intimate relationship between the ethnic nature of a society and the ethnic structure of the political system. The political elites may play a major role in reinforcing ethnic solidarity because, “leaders are inclined towards ethnic politics that produce electoral victory”.

Zionism has been a settler movement and Israel a settler state, whose territory was previously inhabited by Palestinian-Arabs. Despite certain differences with other colonial movements, the actual process of European settlement classifies Zionism as essentially a colonial settler movement. In essence, Zionism is a movement of white Ashkenazi elites displacing a native non-European people. European Jews colonized Palestine during the era of colonialism in Europe. Zionism also adopted the so-called European agenda of “civilizing mission” of bringing the light of modernization to backward people. In the process the Ashkenazi elites disposed the native Arabs territorially and politically and continue to exploit them socially, economically and culturally. The newly found Israeli society excluded Arabs on ground of ethnicity or race and was modeled in the western framework.

The most pertinent feature of Israel is the internal oppression of both Mizrachim and the Palestinians by the Ashkenazi establishment. Israel is divided into minority of dominant white Ashkenazim and a majority of subordinate Afro-Asian people (both

Mizrachim and Palestinians). Israeli state is a three tier society: Ashkenazi at the core, Mizrachim at the periphery and Palestinians at the semi periphery.\textsuperscript{98} According to Smooha, “the patterns of dominance in the Israeli stratification are pervasive-legal and illegal discrimination, economic exploitation, cultural suppression and other forms of oppression”\textsuperscript{99}. The Jewish state established by the Ashkenazi settlers continues the "colonial legacy" by exercising internal colonialism on its non-European population and classical colonialism in the occupied territories.

In broad terms, the Ashkenazim have constituted the charter group and have occupied upper echelons of society in most spheres, including politics, military, economy and culture. The Mizrachim groups are placed in the middle position, lagging behind the Ashkenazim but above the indigenous Palestinians. Strikingly, despite an official ideology of integration and equality towards the Mizrachim, a persistent socio-economic gap has remained between them and Ashkenazi group. As occurs typically in the settler societies, Israel’s indigenous Arab minority and Palestinians in the occupied territories constitute the lowest strata of the society and have been excluded from the cultural, political and economic centers of the society. In addition the Jewish organizations outside Israel have statutory powers within the Israeli system and the World Jewry is always involved in the political affairs of the country which, in a way, negates the basic principles of democracy. Moreover, the “Jewish settlement projects” introduced for the purpose of segregating Jews from Arabs were also used to segregate Ashkenazi elites from other inferior Jewish groups, thereby reinforcing the process of paternalism and control, typical of ethnocratic regimes.\textsuperscript{100} Israel, thus, fits well with the model of an ethnocratic regime and this study would further the analysis within the framework of the above discussed “ethnocracy” model.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

(1) To study the immigration and settlement patterns of Cochin Jews in Israel.

(2) To examine the changing economic position of the Cochin Jews.

\textsuperscript{100} Oren Yiftachel, “Social Control, Urban Planning”, p. 370, (note-44).

38
(3) To examine the educational attainment of the Cochin Jews.

(4) To analyze the nature of political integration and political participation of Cochin Jews.

(5) To analyze the dynamics of socio-cultural integration of Cochin immigrants.

(6) To examine the nature of changing identity of the Cochin Jewry within the Israeli society.

METHODOLOGY

This is an empirical study based mainly on primary data and secondary data. The fieldwork for this study was conducted in Israel between May 2004 and September 2004. The main methods of documentation were through detailed interviews and observances at various Cochin cultural performances and festivals. I had been to Cochin Moshavs in Israel prior to my official Doctoral field trip in 2000-2001 when I visited Israel as part of the Ministry of MHRD International exchange programme. Prior to this, I had also visited the remaining Cochin Jewish families in Ernakulam and also the libraries and archives in Kerala to understand the socio-economic background of the Cochin community.

Primary data was collected from extensive interviews with the members of Cochin Jews in Israel based on a detailed Interview Schedule. Around 180 informants were interviewed mainly from five major Cochin Moshavs- Nivatim, MessillatZion, Aviezer, KefarYuval and Taoz. A convenient sampling was followed in the study whereby the informants were selected through the links established within the community. The key persons of each Moshavs helped to identify the other informants. My knowledge in Malayalam and the acquaintance with Hebrew language was very helpful in conducting my research. Around 70 % of the people were interviewed in Malayalam and the remaining in English. I have stayed for duration of 10 to 15 days in each Moshavs and spent minimum two hours with each informant. It is significant to note that much of the background information came mostly from the older generation who experienced the dark realities of the initial period. Their ability to express in Malayalam and their general knowledge of their own community provided me with
valuable data and vivid pictures of the community. My close association with the Cochin Jewish Heritage Center in Nivatim Moshav further helped me to conduct my research more deeply. Moreover I had the opportunity to attend various social occasions like the marriages, Simchat Torah celebrations, Cochin Aliya Silver Jubilee celebrations, which has undoubtedly helped me to understand the symbols, traditions and the dying cultural heritages of the community. During this period I had extensive discussions with various Israeli scholars and academicians to learn more about the subject. For the sake of protecting the identities of the respondents the fictitious names are used in this thesis.

The secondary data was collected from various libraries and archives in India and Israel, especially—Teenmurti Library, New Delhi. Rattan Tata Library, New Delhi; Cochin Archives Kerala, Public Library, Trivandrum, Paradesi Synagogue Archives, Cochin, Malayala Manorama Documentation Centre, Kottayam, Jewish Community Centre, Santacruz, Bombay, David Sasoon Library, Bombay, Cochin Jewish Heritage Centre, Israel, Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, Bloomfield Library for Humanity and Social Sciences, Jerusalem, Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry Data Bases, Jerusalem The Archeology Library, Tel-Aviv, Yad Benzvi Institute Library, Jerusalem, Hebrew Union College Library, Jerusalem, Rothberg International School’s Library Jerusalem.