CHAPTER 3
ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

This chapter attempts to analyze the economic integration of the Cochin Jews into the Israeli society after immigrating to Israel. Before migration, the Jews of Cochin in India were generally petty traders and peddlers. They were less educated too. The unskilled, physically weak and untrained Cochinis had to face a lot of hurdles in Israel for their survival during the initial period. The lack of knowledge in Hebrew language, geographical isolation, lack of connections in the veteran Ashkenazi community, and the stereotype image among the Israelis that the Indian Jews carry contagious tropical disease further complicated the economic prospects of the Cochinis. Upon their arrival in Israel, the Cochin Jews entered into the low status jobs and later turned towards farming. However the economic recession and the agrarian crisis of mid 1980s have drastically affected the well being of the Cochin Jews, which once again altered their occupational patterns. This chapter narrates the educational status, occupational structure, income, job profile, occupational distribution and the present economic status of the Jews of Cochin in Israel.

DEBATES ON ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Two main questions are of interest to researchers who study the economic integration of immigrants. First involves the question of how best do the immigrants adjust to the destination country, and second, how do they integrate in its economy. Scholars like Borjas and Chiswick pointed that the immigrants’ adjustment to the economy and societal structure of the destination country depends mainly on their human capital. For the most part immigrants are deficient in education, language, geographic proximity to jobs and other qualities that are valuable in the destination country. Over the period of time they learn the language, invest in education and in trade or engage in various professions and migrate internally within the country, thereby adjusting to the geo-economic structure of the country. Moreover, the immigrants’ investment in human capital depends on the
environment from which they come, their age and the length of time they expect to remain in the destination country.¹

The main factors in the economic integration are level of education, age, work experience, social as well as family ties, and length of the time in the country and knowledge of the language of the destination country. In fact knowing the language of the destination country is an important variable that explains immigrants' success in breaking into the job market. In a comprehensive study of immigrants who moved to the United States in 1970s and 1980s, Chiswick proves that the knowledge of English is an important factor in integration in the US job market.² However, the more education one has the better becomes one's chances for earning a high salary. That is, education is the most important asset for providing labor force participation as well as earnings and occupational status. Therefore immigrants with higher levels of education would be more likely to find employment and less likely to sacrifice their original type of employment or status. At the same time, younger people are likely to obtain high salary than the older people. Several researches prove that the presence of large communities from the country of origin and family ties help immigrants find jobs, “advance” at work and receive fair compensation for their work. At the same time the job market can be divided into two sectors: “good jobs” and “bad jobs”. The natives pick the good jobs, and immigrants are pushed into the bad jobs—which are rejected by the natives.³ On the other hand, another way of immigrants integrating into the job market is by opening “small businesses”. Most immigrant businesses require relatively little skill and investment, and generally serve the immigrant community only. The owners hire family members or members of the same ethnic group, who are inexpensive and flexible workforce.

In addition, scholars like Shin and Chang argues that another way of integrating economically is through downward adjustment of one’s occupation.⁴ The literature on international migration contends that immigrants often experience considerable hardships

in finding suitable and rewarding employment. The hardships are, to a great extent, a result of restricted access to information, limited knowledge of the labor market, and inadequate human capital resources (such as language proficiency). Consequently, new arrivals often accept jobs of lower status and lower prestige than those they held in their country of origin. This means immigrants are likely to incur an occupational “cost” as a result of migration. The cost is likely to be substantial immediately upon arrival and may decline with the passage of time. According to the segmented labor market approach, upon arrival the immigrants tend to be channeled into menial low paid jobs and their chances of mobility are restricted and dependent on the acquisition of social and cultural resources and language skills. With the passage of time, however, immigrants are likely to improve the standing in the labor market of the host society. On the other hand, some studies emphasized the high status entry point among several recent immigrant groups to countries like the United States.

Immigrants’ insertion in the labor market and its socio-economic outcome is affected by several factors. The first stems from structural differences between occupational system of the sending and the receiving countries. The greater similarity between the economical and occupational structures of the country of origin and the host country, the greater is the probability that the skills demanded for a specific job in the country of origin will match with those demanded in the one system to another.

Age at the time of immigration is likely to affect labor market integration. For example, young immigrants tend to change occupational positions because they are at early stages of their career. Older immigrants, who are usually at the peak of their careers, by contrast, face greater difficulties in adjustment to the new labor market. At the same time, ‘socio-cultural resources’ that the immigrants bring with them from their country of origin can promote or hinder achievement in the new society. According to Liberson, socio-cultural resources brought from highly industrial, technologically advanced societies can assist immigrant to a great extent in his well being.5

5 Gabriel Lipshitz, *Country on the Move*, pp. 5-11, (note-1).
ISRAELI ECONOMIC SYSTEM—AN OVERVIEW

Israel is the outcome of the Zionist racist movement, and aimed at colonizing the Palestinian society. The status of the movement or its leaders was not based on land ownership, hereditary or feudal rights but the Zionists have become the rulers of the new state through exploitation and bloodshed. The Zionist movement negated the diaspora and stressed Jewish nationalism. It advocated that the Jews must transform themselves and create their own nation state. The Zionist leaders stressed on the so-called productivization of occupations in negation of the Jewish concentration of small trade in the Diaspora, and also stressed on the utmost importance to “collectiveness”. The roots of the structure of the Israeli economy are to be found in the pre-state, Yishuv (Jewish Community) period, the ideologies of that time and the political structure then developed. During the Yishuv period, the economy was based mainly on private capital investment in a free market system and on aid from private individuals like Baron Rothchild. In 1899, a Zionist bank (Jewish Colonial Trust) and in 1901 the Jewish National Fund (Keren Kayamet) were established for land purchases and to expand the Jewish settlement aiming at grabbing the resources of the indigenous Arabs. By 1930s, the new Jewish immigrants become more and more established and they turned into colonizers, using cheap Arab labor. The symbiotic process between Zionist ideals and the socialist beliefs of Eastern European immigrants led to the desire to create a “model society” for the Jews. Part of this approach was the need to move to manual work to cultivate the soil and to create “collective settlement”.

Interestingly, Zionists like Louis Brandeis of the United States advocated a free enterprise system as a basic means to colonize Palestine. They proposed that the Zionist organizations should encourage large scale private investments and the immigration of potential investors into the country to achieve a rapid colonization. On the other hand, people like Chaim Weizman argued that the American experience was not applicable to the conditions in Palestine, that the Zionist organizations should subsidize those who were willing to immigrate and build communal settlements. The idea of Chaim

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Weizman and others was the creation of a Jewish farmer and thereby attaining the "agricultural colonization". In his memoirs Weizman states:

I still believe that the backbone of our work is and always must be agricultural colonization. It is in the village that the real soil of a people—its language, its poetry, its literature, its traditions—springs up from the intimate contact between man and soils.\(^\text{10}\)

The Zionist congress in London in 1920 laid the main principle of the Zionist/Israeli economy. Firstly, it was the belief that agricultural settlement was centered for economic colonization and development. Secondly, the industrial development and urban infrastructure was neglected. Thirdly, it was assumed that trade and services were inferior professions that should be discouraged. Fourthly, it advocated the creation of a paternalistic central management of the agricultural settlement and finally, a private individual was not allowed to settle on the land without being a part of a collective group that can be directed, regulated and managed.

After the formation of Israel, David Ben Gurion disassociated the sovereign power of the state from the tradition of the Yishuv. He argued for nation building and termed it as "Mamlachtiyut" (Statehood).\(^\text{11}\) In the beginning Israel did not alter its ideological beliefs, nor did it move to become a free market economy. Between 1948 and 1965, Israel had 1.2 million immigrants, many of them lacking capital and education. Of these new comers, 55 percent came from Asia and Africa.\(^\text{12}\) Unlike the old timers, the new immigrants were not raised to believe in the Zionist ideology. Slowly the predominant collective ideals were replaced by more adaptive individualism. Three dominant characteristics of the period between 1948 to 1970, therefore, were high defense costs, build up of the mass immigration, and erection of new institutions.\(^\text{13}\) The double burden of fighting a war and losing civilian production because many adults were in the army on the one hand and the cost of absorbing many new immigrants on the other strained the


economy to its limit. On March 1949, the government nationalized all natural resources including water, and all services on which the defense of the country was dependent. Moreover, the government enforced a programme of austerity consisted of rationing all basic necessities; food, medicine, raw material and clothing.

However, as a result of new economic policies and mainly due to massive investment of $850 million in reparations money from the Federal Republic of Germany, the Israeli economy enjoyed a period of rapid growth.\(^\text{14}\) In 1950, most of the development budget was spent on agriculture and water development projects. In 1954-56, for example, the agriculture and water consisted of 56 percent of the development budget compared to a total 11 percent allocated to the manufacturing industry.\(^\text{15}\) In 1955, when Pinhas Sapir became the Minister of Trade and Industry, manufacturing received special inducement. The government encouraged investment and gave subsidized loans and grants to private investors. It also moved from building up of additional agriculturally based *Moshavim* to the construction of "development towns" in the Negev and Galilee. The Israeli government made special efforts to attract private investors to the development towns giving the investors all sorts of direct and disguised subsidies. In the beginning of 1960s, the government initiated a widespread liberalization of raw materials and industrial imports. It chose to increase the effective rate of exchange by hiking export taxes and granting export subsidies. Between 1960 and 1965, the pace of local economic activity was accelerated. The government created state owned enterprises that entered into joint ventures with private individuals to create new manufacturing firms. The government also subsidized private entrepreneurs and encouraged them to raise new plants on their own. In 1957, a specialized bank for industrial development was established. Moreover, the government created export companies for agricultural exports (AGREXCO), and several trading companies for different regions.\(^\text{16}\)

The Israeli agriculture sector underwent great expansion in the first decade of its formation. Agricultural production raised from 274.2 million IL (Israeli Lira) in 1949 to

\(^{14}\) Ibid, p. 11.
586.5 million IL in 1950.\textsuperscript{17} A similar expansion occurred in agricultural exports and in the capital means of agricultural producers. The old timers shared two basic beliefs, firstly that cooperation, based on sentiments of brotherhood, could be made into the dominant mode of social relations, and secondly, the needs of county and of the community were the only criteria for judging the desirability of an operation. Keeping this motive, the Eastern European immigrants have created the \textit{Kibbutz} based on the principle of total cooperation and communal activity. They believed in the saying, “from each according to his ability; to each according to his needs”.\textsuperscript{18} The \textit{Kibbutz} founders believed that they could abolish social classes by abolishing both private property and hired labor. They also attempted to abolish power by rotating all leadership positions. In the beginning, \textit{Kibbutz} members do not own any private property and do not receive any salary or wages for their work.\textsuperscript{19} The \textit{kibbutzim} members were mainly \textit{Ashkenazim} and normally discouraged the \textit{Mizrachim} to be the part of the kibbutz fearing that they would undermine the socialistic and ideological foundations.\textsuperscript{20}

On the other hand, another form of agricultural settlement, the \textit{Moshav} was created by certain old timers, with less intensive communal life. The \textit{Moshav}, like \textit{Kibbutz}, bans hired labor and uses co-operative method of marketing. In contrast to the kibbutz, each family was allocated at least a piece of land, where they worked separately. The major ideas of \textit{Moshav} settlement were self employment, mutual guarantees and mutual marketing.\textsuperscript{21} The most efficient farmer becomes more affluent in this system. The first \textit{Moshav}, \textit{Moshav} Nahal was established in 1921. In the \textit{Moshav} each farmer owns a house and a piece of land, but all are bound by a strict code of mutual aid and responsibility. In addition, a \textit{Moshav} member cannot sell his plot without the approval of all members. To make sure that the \textit{Moshav} remains an agricultural entity, the law requires that at least 80 percent of the residents must be farmers. Moreover, only one son

\textsuperscript{17} Ovadio Shapiro (ed), \textit{Rural Settlements of New Immigrants in Israel}, (Tel Aviv: Settlement Study Centre, 1971), pp. 3-5.


can continue as a member of the Moshav. This regulation was originally designed to avoid having non farmers residing in Moshav and to avoid partition of land in too many small plots. Because of this system some of the second generation members were compelled to leave.\textsuperscript{22}

The industrial development in Israel took place relatively late. Industry rated low on the governmental preference list at first. Between 1949 and 1953, only 11 percent of the government budget went to industry.\textsuperscript{23} It was only towards the end of the 1950s when agricultural development reached a saturation point and construction sector could not provide more employment that systematic investment in industry began. German reparations money, the establishment with governmental money of the industrial development bank in 1958, and the new law for attracting investment capital of 1959 provided the necessary impetus. Between 1959 and 1979 the industrial sector absorbed 48 percent of the added man power, and 35 percent of total man power.\textsuperscript{24} Governmental capital and initiative was decisive in this process, especially in view of governmental control over capital imports. The government actively engaged in attracting private investors and provided them with generous loans at low interest rates, financed the development of infrastructure, developed a vast network of vocational schools, financed exports, protected against competing imports and aided new plants in distress. On the other hand, the expansion of industry encouraged by generous governmental aid consolidated the ownership and managerial positions of a large number of mostly Ashkenazi entrepreneurs. The textiles, garment, metal and aircraft industries got the maximum support of the government.\textsuperscript{25}

The period between 1967 and 1973 was of rapid growth fuelled by large investments in a rapid expansion of defense related industries. The occupied territories were a major source of low cost labor resource and the increased immigration was a cause of rising demand. The import surplus was covered by loans from the US government, and unaltered transfers of world Jewry contributions. Over the years, the motivating value of

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{25} Shlomo Swirski, \textit{The Mizrachim majority}, pp. 5-9, (note-15).
the so called “socialist-collective” ideology was reduced and a sense of individualism grew. During the same period, the government embraced a privatization programme. It sold forty six state owned, mostly small, enterprises. More and more liberal economists pointed to many distortions in the Israeli economy and called for the use of market forces and demanded the reduction of government interventions. Many resented the paternalistic economic structure but the defense needs and the new imperative for integrating new immigrants into the mainstream economic life was cited as important reasons for the government to regulate and direct the economy.

According to the 1989 statistics, 65 percent of workers in the industry were Mizrachim. The Mizrachim were soon over-represented in most branches of industrial production. A large proportion of Mizrachim thus became industrial proletariats. On the other hand, industrial development provided new avenues of mobility for many Ashkenazim; in the ownership and management of hundreds of new plants, in engineering and technical jobs, in industry related banking activities, in marketing and in research.

With the passage of time, the so-called socialistic-collective ideas of Labor Party started eroding. Many young generation members resented the central control and the strong political directions in all walks of life. They were affluent, educated and thus less dependent on the government in their daily affairs. Unlike their parents, most of the young people looked at the United States as a symbol of freedom, liberty and mainly economic efficiency. For them, any institution not compatible with a free market approach was wrong. Disillusioned labor supporters, mostly youth, voted Likud under the leadership of Menachim Begin to power in 1977. The new government immediately announced selling of most of the state owned enterprises. The fluctuation of the oil prices, the Lebanon War of 1982, and the collapse of agriculture prices in the world market led the Israeli economy to a great crisis. Before the Likud came to power, Israel’s gross foreign debt was $11.5 billion. By the end of 1985, it had reached $30.5 billion. In 1982 for the first time since 1953 the growth was virtually zero. The increasing share

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27 Ibid, p. 423.
of the defense in the national expenditure and the increase of energy costs aggravated the existing crisis. At the same time, the size of public sector deficit to GDP grew and peaked at 17 percent.

The rising public and private consumption in the face of stagnant output led to a reduction in investment, to growing foreign debt and to recurring difficulties in the balance of payments and later to a serious liquidity crisis. All these led also to a steady acceleration of inflation and made planning and investment extremely difficult. The serious outcome of the crisis was massive unemployment. In the 1980s the Israeli economy faced the worst crisis when the external debt had grown from $11,344 million to $18,051 million, and the country’s GDP actually decreased to -0.8 percent in 1985.30

In 1985, after the inflation touched 445 percent, the government implemented a radical emergency stabilization programme and launched a massive privatization drive of its economy. During 1995 to 2000, the foreign direct investment (FDI) in Israel was $33.2 billion.31 The state’s privatization strategy had widely affected the agrarian system and the occupational pattern also changed rapidly. In 1985, the government designed a set of “new economic programmes”. These included price control, wage freeze, rate of exchange pegging and credit restrictions. The US granted a special aid to ease the pressure on the balance of payments front. But the Likud government slowly withdrew the investments on labor dominated industries, the sick fund, the Kibbutz and the Moshavs. However, by the beginning of 1989 Israeli economy again plunged into a deep recession coupled with relatively high rate of employment. In 1989 the public sector deficit was 6 percent of the GDP and the government devalued the shekel by 8 percent.32

The first Intifada (Palestinian Uprising) in late 1980s also hampered the economic structure of Israel to a large extent. However, Israel has been assisted both by the continuing substantial levels of official US military assistance and other aids and by large financial donations from the US and other Jewish communities abroad, the former being estimated at more than US $100,000 million between 1986 and 1989.33 By 1991, the

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31 Ibid, p. 22.


Israeli government privatized hundreds of public sector units and in 1995 the government took over the Sick fund from *Histradut*.

Earlier the Israeli economy was composed of three sectors: the public sector, the *Histradut*, and the private sector. The public sector includes all economic units owned by the State of Israel. The *Histradut* is a unique Israeli creation without any parallel outside Israel. Literally this word means “the federation” or “the Federation of Labour”. The Zionist leaders created the *Histradut* to control the economic situations by controlling the political machinery. The *Histradut* is not just a trade union, but trade unions are one of the departments of *Histradut*. It was also an organization taking care of foreign relations, welfare, health, mutual aid, old age institutions as well as many economic institutions. In the economic side, *Histradut* had some large holding companies such as Solel Boneh—the largest construction firm in Israel, Koor manufacturing plants and Bank Hapoalim—the largest bank in Israel. In addition to these units, the *Histraduts* had a veto power in all *Kibbutzim* and *Moshavim* and in hundreds of co-operatives, in manufacturing, transportation and in several large firms in which it used to own major shares, such as the Mehorot Water Company and Zim Shipping Line. The co-operative organizations also own such firms as “Tnuva”- which dominates the marketing of fresh agricultural products like fruits, vegetables, eggs, poultry and fish.34

To a large extent, the *Histradut* was self-contained. It is sometimes accused of being “a state within the state”. Many of the Israelis used to be member of the Histradut, very often not for ideological reasons but for very pragmatic ones. Till 1995, 80 percent of the population received first rate medical services from Histradut’s sick fund. In 1988, the total strength of *Histradut* was $1.6 million. The *Histradut* also own services like travel agencies, hotels, newspapers publishing houses, insurance (*Hasneh*), etc. Today *Histradut* is no longer a major owner of productive resources due to the privatization of most of its industries and has recently lost control over its sick fund. In 1995, the government took over the financial control of the ailing health care system, which will now be financed through a health tax rather than through voluntary memberships in the

various sick funds. Till 1995, major sick funds were owned by the Histradut and they provided the health care services on a deficit-financing basis, with the state covering the deficits each year. However the government handed over many sick funds to private agencies and this act signifies a major step towards the privatization of health care system.  

During 1985 to 1990, more than ten state owned enterprises were sold for a total of $338.5 billion. The pace of privatization picked up in the first half of the 1990s, during which period the Israeli government sold its leading public sectors like Israel Chemicals Ltd and the telecommunication company Bezeq. In the mid 1990s, the government sold the leading banks like Bank Hapoalim, Bank Leumi and Clal to U.S based companies. In 1996, Benjamin Netanyahu government’s privatization and liberalization policies literally put an end to the much hyped and shallow “Socialist-collective” Zionist ideals. The first three quarters of the year 2000 was characterized by rapid economic growth led by exports, which rose by 19.9 percent in volume terms. Business sector growth accelerated to 7.4 percent in 2000 (from 2.0 percent in 1999) reflecting a rise in the output of high technology industries, though growth rates in the traditional manufacturing and construction industries remained low. The worsening of Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the ‘9/11’ attack on the US was a major jolt for the Israeli economy. The Israeli tourism industry which is a major source of foreign currency earnings (in 2000 these amounted to $3.8 billion) was hit badly due to the Palestinian uprising or Second Intifada.

By late 1990s, the level of foreign direct investment in Israeli economy increased rapidly. At the same time, opening avenues to multinationals, weakening the state owned enterprises and allowing the influx of foreign capital into the Israeli market constituted crucial steps in the formation of a new capitalist class. Reduction in subsidies, fluctuation in agricultural prices and hike in water and power charges virtually hampered the agrarian sector. The relatively less government revenues and increased military and security spending produced a widening deficit in 2002, in which GDP fell by 3.1 percent.

37 Ibid, p. 18.
Unemployment increased from 8.8 percent in 2000 to 9.3 percent in 2001 and further to 11.3 percent in 2002.\textsuperscript{38} In the year 2003, the government recorded a $579 million budget deficit, the highest overdraft in the country's history.\textsuperscript{39} As a result, the Israeli state is less and less able to shield its working class from economic distress. In addition, economic transformation means that Israel is facing a crisis of legitimacy stemming from the contradiction between neo-liberal capitalism and the state's traditional role. This has been clearly illustrated in Israeli commerce Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's 2003 economic recovery plan, which fully adopts the recommendation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The key features of the plan include approximately $2.4 billion cut in government spending, a 8 percent cut in public sector wages, freeze on national insurance benefits, 5 percent rise in water tariffs, public transportation and municipal taxes, raising the pension age to 67 and canceling immigrant benefits, mortgage grants and aid to university students.\textsuperscript{40} The plan will severely affect the middle class and lower middle class populations, especially the Mizrachim in the development towns and Moshavs, as many are loosing the tax benefits previously given by the state. The hardest hit will be the Palestinian citizens of Israel, whose poverty levels already far exceed those of Jewish Israeli citizens. It is in this context that the economic development of the Jews of Cochin should be looked into.

**ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF COCHIN JEWS IN KERALA**

The Jews of Cochin, one of the indigenous migrant communities of Kerala were clustered around seven synagogues in and around Cochin. They were divided into two groups—the White Jews (Paradesis or Foreigners) and the Black Jews (Malabrees). While the Paradesis landed in Kerala coast in the 15th century from Spain and Portugal during the Inquisition, the Malabrees or Black Jews' existence in Kerala dates back to 2000 years.\textsuperscript{41} The conflicts, factions and internal feuds among the Pardesis and Malabrees have long been common features of Jewish life in the Kerala coast. The white Jews were rich merchants and controlled the pepper trade of Kerala till the British period. Because of the


\textsuperscript{40} Adam Hanieh, "From State led Growth to Globalization", pp. 5-21, (note-38).


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Paradesis’ efficiency in using different languages and international contracts, 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.

On the other hand, the Malabarees were relatively poor and chiefly engaged as fishermen, book binders, peddlers, petty traders, wood choppers and in other unskilled labours. It is noted that most of the Cochin Jews were petty traders. The Malabaree Jews were concentrated mainly in five places—Cochin, Ernakulam, Mala, Paravur and Chendamangalam. Historically, the synagogues of the Jews of Cochin had vast track of lands and properties. Scholars like Segal noted that as early as in 1711, the Jews of Cochin were granted lands by the local kings. The synagogue had the paramount authority over all the properties of Jews or more simply the Cochin Jews always had a sort of communal wealth. Mandelbaum noted that in 1937 there were some 1,400 Jews in Cochin, 125 of them were Paradesis.

The great majority of the working men were petty traders, buying small quantities of commodities from producers and selling them to merchants or directly to the consumers, sometimes from small shop in front of their homes. Very few were craftsmen or worked in other types of occupations. Income was very low and most of the populations were very poor. According to Reissner in 1941, of the 1,935 total Malabaree population 1,238 were engaged in small and infrequent peddling. The Jewish official who visited Cochin in 1952 reported that “in Cochin they led an idle life, they did not plan for the future, and they ate when they had the means.” One of the elderly respondents, Haim Raphael of Nivatim Moshav told the researcher:

Making a living in one way was very easy, one would buy a few Chickens or some eggs or some fishes in one place and then sell them in another place at a small profit. A peddler could buy and sell his stock within a span of few minutes or in few hours. Once the goods were sold, he would

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42 Ibid, p 38.
return home for the remainder of the day, sitting in the synagogue or going to liquor shops with friends to drink.

In Kerala, differences between individuals and families with respect to properties and other forms of wealth were not big since most of them were poor or belonged to the lower strata of the society. But the life of the Cochin Jews was centered on the synagogue. The synagogue had title to land, buildings, paddy fields and coconut groves, granted to them either by local rulers or the Jewish traders. Each synagogue had an elected committee (or Yogam) of three to five elders who together with a hired manager took care of the synagogue properties. With the decline in individual prosperity the importance of the public property owned by the synagogues increased. In the inception some part of the synagogue’s income was used to help the needy, but later a system of “holiday allotments” was instituted and cash grants were distributed on major Jewish holidays to all of the synagogue community. It is possible too, that this arrangement might have been hindered the productive tendencies of Cochin Jews. Mandelbaum pointed that:

Wealthier than any of their congregants are the synagogue themselves. The accumulation, through the centuries of urns in gold and silver of land bequests now contributes to the support of the Cochin Jews and for the proper celebration of the festival

In 1953, the Jewish Agency officials who visited Kerala stated that the communal property of Cochin Jews was worth 30,000-40,000 pounds. On the two of the festival occasions of the ritual year, Pesach and Rosh Hashana, payments where made by the synagogue manager to each head of household. This amount was often enough for a household to live on for three to four weeks. In addition, synagogue funds were available in times of need to pay for burials, confirmations, circumcisions, weddings and any other worthy requirement. The needy person would petition the manager or the committee of elders, who would consider the request and sanction the required amount. Yitzhak Oren of Moshav Taoz, an elderly Cochin Jew puts it quite plainly:

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47 Kushner Gilbert, Immigrants from India in Israel, pp. 16-21, (note-44).
Much of the income of the synagogue is used to support the poor of the congregation, and as most of the people were very poor, and need help all the time, they get money from the Synagogue.

One of the respondents from Messilat Zion responded:

The orthodox views and the rigid religious laws have led to the educational and social backwardness of the community. We are yet to come out of this and the impact of this backwardness is still evident in the community even after the immigration. The elders didn’t try to change according to the circumstances. The missionary schools in Cochin were ready to give us free education, but the elders didn’t relent, fearing conversion to Christianity.

Table 3.1
The Size of property in Kerala before Migration

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<tr>
<th>Size of land</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 10 cents</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>42.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-20 cents</td>
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<td>21-50 cents</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
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</table>

(Hundred Cents = One acre)

As mentioned before, the Cochin Jews had very less land properties and assets, and most of the properties were under the control to Synagogue. Majority of the respondents pointed out that they never had vast tracts of coconut groves, paddy fields or rubber estates unlike the native Keralites. Table 3.1 shows that out of 180 respondents, 42.2 percent had less than 10 cents of land, 13.3 percent had 11-20 cents and 12.2 percent owned 21-50 cents. At the same time 32.2 percent of the respondents did not respond as they have no idea about their diasporic assets since they were very young when they migrated or born in Israel after migration. Table 3.1 clearly shows that the Cochin Jewry was never a land owning class and their income from the land might have been very less.

As indicated before, the properties granted to the Cochini Jews by the local rulers or
traders were under the control of synagogues. An elderly Jew from Kefar Yuval reported that:

In Kerala the Cochin Jews had very less assets compare to other Keralites. We were very poor and we didn’t have any income from the land. Even in the synagogue land, we never used to work as the authorities used to give it on lease to non-Jewish natives.

Table 3.2

_Educational Qualification before Migration_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Qualification</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
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<td>Primary (Std 1-4)</td>
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<td>High School (Std 9-12)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>180</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sabras are those who born in Israel)

The government of India had classified the Cochin Jews as the most backward community in 1948 due to this low socio-economic affair. The average education of the Cochin Jews before migration was between standard 6 to 8. Table 3.2 indicates that 10.6 percent of the total respondents were illiterate before migration, while 37.8 percent had only primary education (i.e. Std 1-4) and 16.7 percent studied up to middle school (Std 5-8). At the same time, 9.4 percent have completed high school before migration, graduates and post graduates were 1.1 percent and .6 percent respectively. While 23.9 percent of the respondents did not study in India as they were born in Israel.

The Cochin Jews did not pay much attention to education while in India due to certain factors. Firstly, economic constraints was one of the major reasons for their educational backwardness as most of them were petty traders or peddlers and it was very difficult for
them to afford education for the children. The Cochin synagogue had vast tracts of land
and properties. In fact the Jewish Agency before migration estimated that synagogues
altogether had more than $50,000 worth properties. But the Cochin Jewry did not utilize
that money for their children’s education. Secondly, the Cochin Jews were extremely
religious and the rigid approach had hampered the education of the Cochin Jewish
children.

Yosi Oren of Moshav Shakhar indicated:

Sabbath and various Jewish holidays were the main obstacles for the
education of Cochin Jews in Kerala. The elders never permitted the
children to attend schools or to study in Sabbath and in Jewish holidays.
The Jewish festival Pesach always clashed with the annual examinations
and we were not allowed to study for the whole week. I remember
sometimes when the university examinations were on Saturdays or
festivals we always skipped the examinations. Our elders never
understood the seriousness of education and we are still suffering because
of that.

According to another elderly respondent Haim Yitzhak:

One of the painful events in my life was when I was asked to stand outside
the class since I didn’t have the money to pay fees. I cried a lot and
stopped going to school from the very next day. Our elders lacked vision.
The synagogue property and income was more than enough for the
education of the Cochin children. But they didn’t utilize the money for
the proper cause and we are still suffering because of that.
Table 3.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petty Trader</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peddler/Vendor</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Skilled Laborer</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not responded</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 shows that majority of the Cochin Jews were not from agrarian background. The table gives the occupational background of the respondents or their parents while in Kerala before migration. Among the respondents, 35.6 percent were petty traders before migration, 37.2 percent were peddlers or vendors in Kerala, and only 2.8 percent of the total respondents were farmers and 3.9 percent were semi-skilled laborers. However, 16.7 percent did not respond to the question. Majority of Cochin Jews were engaged in selling (petty trading) eggs, chicken, bananas, coir, coconut, ink, fish, vegetables, etc. and only few had permanent shops like book binding shops, meat shops, oil business, fish shop or grocery shops. In fact, Yosef of Nivatim indicated that very few from the community were engaged in farming, since majority of them had less or no lands. But certain Jewish families of Chendamanagalam village were engaged in farming as they had more land compared to other Jewish families. Majority of the Cochin Jews had very low income and they were highly dependent on synagogue payments. Moreover the Cochini women were not permitted to work outside during those days.

Table 3.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Structure</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joint Family</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>67.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

93
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nuclear Family</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>8.9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sabras</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Majority of the respondents stated that the Cochin Jews had joint family system in Kerala before migration. Out of the total respondents, 67.2 percent said that the structure of the family in India was joint family and 8.9 percent responded as nuclear family. The Sabras, 23.9 percent of total respondents, did not respond to the question. The results of Table (3.4) are not surprising, since joint family structure was strongly prevalent in Kerala till 1960s and 1970s. The elderly male was the head of the household and the other family members followed his directions. The elders of the house used to take all the decisions. Women didn’t have any role in the family affairs. Many of the respondents indicated that there was shortage of food and other necessitate due to large family size. Traditionally Cochin Jews lived in joint families which included head of the household, his parents, married brothers and their family, daughters, married sons and their family, and children. The community was centered on the joint and extended families which functioned as a highly cohesive unit. The joint family system was considered disadvantageous because it was slightly difficult to protect and support all the members of the large family. The children were not educated properly due to the lack of resources as the family size was large.

**IMMIGRATION TO ISRAEL**

Cochin Jews were not aware of and sensitized to the Zionist movement before migration to Israel. The respondents, especially the elderly, mentioned that the community was sharply divided over the question of immigration to Israel. The elders were not convinced with the idea of emigration and discouraged the youngsters who were involved in Zionist activities. Interestingly, the whole Paradesi community opposed the idea of Zionism and emigration to Israel as they were very rich and affluent. The Paradesi Jews owned major ferry services and transport companies of Ernakulam. But the Malabarees, on the other hand, were enthusiastic to emigrate mainly due to their low socio-economic status.

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major factor for the immigration was the economic depression in which the community found itself in India. Immigration to Israel held forth the hope of bettering their economic standing. It was told by many respondents that the economic distress and poverty were the main reasons that prompted the Cochini (Malabarees) youngsters to speed up the emigration process rather than the religious belief. But the youth finally convinced the elders by connecting the whole debate with the religious sentiments or "Messianic Zionism". Messianic Zionism, i.e. the age old Jewish tradition of belief in the Messianic era which will bring ultimate release from exile, the return to Zion, the rebuilding of the Holy Temple, and rest in the land of Jewish heroic age.

One of the respondents, Daniel of Moshav Aviezer told the researcher:

> The formation of Israel and the call to immigrate by David-Ben Gurion was a blessing in disguise for the poor Cochin Jews, as majority of them lived in utmost difficulty in Kerala. We are in a much better position here than in India.

In 1949, emigration of seventeen Cochin families was arranged through the Jewish Agency officials stationed in Bombay. Between 1952 and 1954, a few hundred children between the ages of twelve and sixteen were brought to Israel by Youth Aliya, an agency that controlled the youth immigration. It was hoped that children would act as guides for older people when they arrive in Israel.49

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of Migration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948-1954</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-1960</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-1970</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971 onwards</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabras</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5 shows that 41.7 percent of the respondents immigrated to Israel between 1948 and 1954 and 26.1 percent migrated between 1955 and 1960. In fact, bulk of the community migrated to Israel during the 1948-1960 period. Between 1961 and 1970, 7.2 percent migrated and only 1.1 percent of the total respondents emigrated after 1971. At the same time, 23.9 percent did not respond to the questions as they were born in Israel or Sabras. It is important to note that economically well off families did not immigrate in the beginning (which is a small percentage), and majority of the respondents who immigrated in or after 1970s mentioned that lack of marriage partners for their children in Kerala prompted them to immigrate. One of the respondents Simon, who immigrated in 2002, had to marry a Christian girl (later converted) since he couldn’t find a Jewish partner for him in Kerala.

The Cochin Jews were one of the few early immigrants who paid for their travel to Israel. The Cochin Jews sold all their synagogue properties and deposited the entire amount to the Jewish Agency for travel and other expenses, but many respondents have claimed that the Jewish Agency have not returned the balance money to Cochin and their transaction was not transparent. This was a continuing source of friction in Israel and one of the factors involved in the complex relationship between the Cochin and the Jewish Agency.

The years 1948-1951 are considered the years of mass immigration in Israel. These included about a quarter of a million from Eastern Europe, mainly immigrants from Poland and Rumania, almost the entire Bulgarian Jewish community, and Jews from Yugoslavia, also many from Turkey, North Africa, Iran and almost the entire Jewish populations of Libya, Yemen, Iraq, Morocco and Kurdistan. The settlement department considered many immigrants as nonproductive due to age, diseases, or lack of skills. In 1952, Israel made certain principles of selection for immigrants who were not in physical danger. Only those who were considered able bodied or could be supported by others living in Israel were allowed to migrate from “non dangerous areas”.

This change in policy directly affected the Cochin immigration. Some members of the community had filarial or elephantiasis, a disease carried through mosquitoes, which

51 Oren Yiftachel, “Social control, urban planning and ethno class relations,” p. 425, (note-26)
produces extreme swelling of the limbs. It was unknown to the Israelis as to whether this disease was contagious. A doctor was sent from Israel to examine the problem. He found that the disease existed in the towns of Cochin and Ernakulam, but not in the villages. In his report, he commented not only on the health of the community but also on the community as a whole. Terming them “primitive” a number of times, he considered the children to be deficient in learning, many of them undernourished, and the women and men illiterate. He claimed that religion had nothing to do with understanding the principles of Judaism but rather with guarding the ritual precepts and with protecting the material properties of synagogue. According to the doctor, it is amazing how these “primitive...modest...nice..., quiet people” could suddenly become “liars, gossipsers and cheats when the matter concerned the synagogue property. He further noted that there is “great primitivism”, a low cultural level, lack of professional training, and lack of experience in physical work. He recommended selective immigration of a few hundred a year.\(^{52}\)

On learning about this recommendation the members of the Cochini community decried the delay and they had to wait for more than two years. The Cochini leader A B Saleem’s complaint to the Jewish Agency was that it was trying “to bring people from Europe, Yemen, and Shanghai and deny the same privilege to the Cochini Jews which tantamount to discrimination”. Cochini Jews complained that the doctor sent from Israel was not an expert in tropical diseases and demanded another. Later Cochini leader A B Saleem went to Israel and personally met David Ben Gurion and convinced him about the plight of the community in Kerala. Eventually, another doctor was sent to Cochin and he pronounced the disease not epidemic, particularly if the affected people were relocated in cool or dry areas, and finally the immigration was allowed.\(^{53}\)

\textbf{Initial Period in Israel}

Upon their arrival, most of the Cochinis were sent to Shaar Aliya or transit camps. As per Table 3.6, 50 percent of the total respondents were lodged in transit camps initially, 5.6 percent went directly to Moshavs, 7.8 percent stayed in Kibbutz, and only 2.8 percent landed in development towns. The 23.9 percent who did not respond were born in Israel.

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### Table 3.6  
*Initial place of Residence in Israel*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transit Camps</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moshavs</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kibbutz</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Towns</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not responded</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An elderly member residing in Aviezer narrated painfully the initial days:

> Upon our arrival to the airport in Tel Aviv, we were taken to transit camps in trucks and sprayed with DDT, fearing that we carried tropical diseases. Initially each family got a tent or two families would share a large tent. The living conditions were very horrible and cleanliness was unusually substandard. Tents and huts were lit with Kerosene lanterns but the Mabaara (Transit camps) in general was left in the dark. There was shortage of supplies like vegetables and milk and the Cochini Jews who were submissive and weak did not fight for necessities unlike Yemenites and Moroccans.

The immigration in Israel reached its peak in the first five years in Israel—from 1948 to 1953, doubling the existing Jewish population. Around 1,209,273 Jews migrated between 1948 and 1952. However the state expenditure on immigration did not result in unproductive process. On the contrary, the functions fulfilled by the state were used as vehicles for the establishment of an all-encompassing relation of dependence between the immigrants and the dominant *Ashkenazi* sections within the Israeli society. Most of the *Mizrachim* were sent to transit camps and by 1951 around 250,000 people were in transit camps. The transit camps were isolated geographically and socially and they presented the most encompassing and most visible form of dependence. Every aspect concerning the transit camps—their municipal affiliation, their political institutional organizations, employment of their inhabitants and basic human attitude towards the transit camp
dwellers and their culture—all subordinated the interests of the Mizrahim to the reproductive needs of the dominant categories of the veteran population. The transit camps were populated through negative selection. All those who had no way of coping on their own, and were thus most dependent on the state, were directed to transit camps. In 1955, 83 percent of the inhabitants of the transit camps were Mizrahim. On the other hand, the Ashkenazi who had better connection and influence was concentrated in the urban cities in reasonably good apartments. According to Israeli sociologist Debora Bernstein, only 15 percent of the European immigrants were sent to transit camps and that too for a short period.

An elderly respondent Yacov Yohannan said:

Communication between transit camps and nearby settlements was often very inadequate due to poor roads and insufficient public transport. In the initial period there was a strict rationing in the whole country and the conditions were most severe in the transit camps. There was shortage of food and medical supplies. Employment is mainly in the nearby Kibbutzim in agriculture, in construction, in road building and forestation. The wages were very less and it was totally inadequate for large Cochini families.

The Cochinis stayed in transit camps for nearly 4 years and then were sent to different Moshavs. Some Cochinis were allotted to Kibbutz like Mayan Baruch, Ashdot Yacov. But very soon the Cochinis left the Kibbutz and moved to transit camps as the Kibbutz where mainly inhabited by the Ashkenazis, who were not religious. The non-kosher, non-religious way of life and the European-oriented members were too alien to Cochini habits and beliefs. Yahov Simeon, one of the respondents, explained why the Cochin left the Kibbutzim:

In Kibbutz, the Ashkenazim looked down upon us as primitives and treated as if we were from remote jungles. We were subjected to hard work like loading things, breaking rocks. Even in Sabbath, we were forced to work. Their culture of men and women kissing in public, common bath rooms and even the dress were very alien to our culture. We virtually didn’t have
any freedom and had to work 10 hrs a day, which was never recognized by anyone. So we left the Kibbutzim and went back to transit camps.

Consequently, the Israeli government regarded “population dispersion policy” as one of its basic principles and as the main consideration in the geographic discussion of the immigrants of the 1950s. The reasons for population dispersion policy in Israel were geopolitical, security related and economic. The government encouraged Jewish presence in the occupied areas and sparsely populated frontiers of the country and establishment of localities along the borders as part of the country’s defense system and exploitation of the mineral ores and other natural resources located in the periphery. According to Oren Yiftachel, the Israeli dispersion policy was and still a Judaization project aimed to exert Jewish control on the entire Israeli/Palestinian territory, which still included a Palestinian Arab population of some 13-14 percent who remained after the 1948 war. Judaization also aimed to block the potential return to their homes and villages of some 750,000 Palestinians, who were driven out in the 1948 wars. The major strategically important areas were the country’s principal frontiers: the Negev in the south and Galilee in the north.

Most of the immigrants, who arrived in the 1950s, came from North Africa and Asia. They were mostly in a horrible condition and the result was that the immigrants were dependent on governmental agencies for housing, employment and such services as education and health care. Therefore the government had almost exclusive control over the geographical placement of the immigrants and for the reasons described above, it chose the peripheral areas. During 1950s, ethnic tension aroused very often between Ashkenazim and Mizrachim, as Ashkenazim enjoyed social contacts and cultural affinities with veteran Israelis while Mizrachi lacked such contacts.

54 Gabriel Lipshitz, *Country on the move*, p. 27, (note-1).
Table 3.7
Choice of Residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice of Residence</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own Choice</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposed</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Responded</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.7 maintains that 55.6 percent of the total respondents had no role in choosing the place of residence and the present location is imposed on them, while 16.1 percent accepted that they had chosen the place of residence. But 28.3 percent did not respond to the above question. As mentioned before, the Cochinis who were highly dependent on the establishment for all aspects of livelihood, they never had the courage to resist the directions of the settlement department. Lack of knowledge in Hebrew or inability to communicate in Hebrew was one of the main factors that forced them to comply with the directions of the settlement department.

One of the respondent commented:

The Jewish Agency allotted us different remote regions like Negev desert, Kiriyat Shmona, Dimona and Bethshemsh. From the transit camps they brought us here in trucks without consulting us and even after reaching the destination we could barely understood the place. We had limited choice because we were quite new to the alien atmosphere and language was a major barrier in expressing our views.

Table 3.8
Opinion about the location allotted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you satisfied with location allotted by the government?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>69.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Responded</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As per table 3.8, 69.4 percent of the respondents were totally unhappy with the location allotted by the government, while only 6.7 percent liked the new destinations. But 22.2, mostly Sabras, did not respond. This clearly shows the arbitrary dispersion policy of the government did not suit the aspirations of the new immigrants. The settlement department had planned for the Cochinis to settle in hill or desert areas as a health recommendation to retard the spread of their tropical diseases. The Jewish Agency allotted the settlements to Cochin Jews which were abandoned by the earlier immigrants as they were unfit to live-like Nivatim in the Negev desert, Kefar Yuval in the north and hilly settlements in the Judean hills like Taoz, Messillat Zion and Aviezer. The extreme cold weather, however, was totally unfamiliar to the Cochinis and they had no idea of how to face the winter. In 1954, thirty Cochinis died in Alma near hilly Galilee due to extreme cold. In the northernmost area of Israel, a few meters from the Lebanon border is Kefar Yuval. In the Jerusalem corridor by the pre 1967 borders are Taoz and Messillat Zion and Aviezer very adjacent to West Bank border. The dispersion of the Cochin Jewry in these remote moshavs reflects the Israeli policy of population settlement first for defense purposes and second for economic viability.

Sara Yohannan of Taoz told the researcher:

My father did not like the new destination and always wanted to go back to Kerala. But he had no other choice and he became a drunkard because of the frustration and helplessness. The elders were never spared from hard work, which they were physically not capable of.

Over the years, 70 to 80 percent of the Cochinis live in the five major Moshavs-Nivatim, Taoz, MessilatZion, Aviezer and Kefar Yauval. Some Cochinis settled in other Moshavs like Kfar Uriya, Opher, Givat Koha and Yesud Hamala. Nivatim is in the Negev region, 8 km east of the Biblical town of Beersheba near the Beersheba-Dead Sea highway. In the beginning, around 50 Cochin families settled in Nivatim under the supervision of Lova Elias of the Jewish Agency. Nivatim is affiliated to the "Thenuat Ha Moheveem" or the Moshav movement of the Mapai Party.

Yakov Itzhak narrated the initial period of his stay in following words:
Nivatim was a barren land with no water and electricity. It was a desolate desert with rocks and thick bushes. We were given small huts to stay. It was impossible for a large family like us to stay in the small houses. Houses given by the settlement authority were not proportionate to the size of the family. Food was provided through strict rationing. We suffered a lot as the European boiled foods were alien to us. The land was not suitable for cultivation in the beginning as the soil was salty and bringing this soil to the level of fertility took several years. Language was a major barrier towards socialization as none of us knew how to converse in Hebrew. Climate was extremely hot with thick dust wind all the times. The most dangerous part was poisonous desert snakes. I don't want to remember those terrible days. The average Cochin family had ten members and they had to live in one room set.

But the Cochinis had chosen the agricultural settlements because the settlement assured that the Cochin Jews live together in the Moshavs. Since 1952, most agricultural settlements were composed of immigrants from the same country or persons who speak common language. Most of the Cochinis never had the courage to settle independently in development towns unlike Bene Israeli community from Bombay. The reason was Bene Israeli community was mostly semi skilled people, who worked in the metropolitan cities like Bombay and had the experience of independent urban life. The Bene Israelis mostly settled in development towns and many of them immigrated in the 1960s.

At the same time, the condition in hilly Moshavs like MessilatZion, Taoz and Aviezer were most horrible as all of them were located in barren hills. The above mentioned Moshavs were totally isolated from the main cities and horse cart was the major mode of transportation for many years. The respondents pointed that missiles often fell on Moshavs since they were very close to the Jordan border. In the beginning water shortage was very common and the entire hills had no proper electricity. The climate was unbearable for Cochinis as the winter was very chilly in the mountains. The houses were made of tins and four to five families had to share one toilet or bathroom. The mountains were without trees or plants and the Cochinis were engaged initially in clearing the rocks
and stones. The old people were mainly confined in the huts, as it was very difficult for them to walk on the steep mountains.

Elias Yudha of Mesillat Zion narrated the initial period as:

We suffered very much in the beginning as the place allotted to us was rocky mountain without water and electricity. The whole region was without trees and filled with rocks and stones. We had to fetch water from the valley on shoulders as the settlement department did not bother to put pipelines in the hills. The older generation’s expectation from Israel was very high as the ‘land of milk and honey’. But the harsh life of mountains with no water and limited food had broken their morale. All the male members irrespective of their age worked in the hills for 8 to 10 hours. Unfortunately, the alcohol consumption was very high among the elders mainly due to the hard life which was quite unfamiliar to them. Many Cochin male members died of high alcoholism.

Another Moshav, Kefar Yuval lies 3 km north of the northern town Qiryat Shemona on the Israel-Lebanon-Syria border near the Golan hills. It was a thick jungle and the earlier inhabitations of the Kurds who abandoned and left the Moshav as it was unfit to live. Moshav Kefar Yuval is literally few meters from the Syrian border surrounded by army barracks on one side and Bedouins on the other end. The usual climate was extremely cold with heavy snow falls in the winter. The only connection with outside world was a narrow muddy road and donkeys were the main mode of transport. The Moshav was not electrified and lights were not allowed many times in the night due to security reasons. This settlement was completely isolated from the outside world and the nearest settlement Karmiel was 3 hours from the Moshav. The respondents from Kefar Yuval mentioned that for many years they traveled outside the Moshav very rarely since public transport was not extended up to Golan Heights.
Table 3.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions of the Land / Houses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Good</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>50.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Responded</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.9 discusses the condition of the lands or houses given to the Cochinis by the Settlement Department in the initial period. Around 50.6 percent of the respondents reported that the condition of the land/house given by the government initially was absolutely bad; while 23.3 percent responded as satisfactory and only 2.2 percent felt it was good. The Sabras (23.9%) did not respond to this question. According to table 3.9, the Cochinis were placed in bad conditions and isolated areas by the government. The table reflects the initial settlement process of Mizrahi at large. The government did not allot the houses according to the size of the families. Most of the respondents mentioned that they were housed in small huts made of wood or tin sheets and the huts were not sufficient for large families like Cochinis. The houses or huts provided by the government never had more than two rooms and most of the houses were not electrified. In addition, three to four families were given one to two toilets or bathrooms and mostly in very unhygienic conditions. The houses didn’t have water connections and the inhabitants usually depended on common water taps. Moreover the land was mostly salty, filled with rocks, infertile and unfit for agriculture.

The geographical distribution of the Cochinis should be understood within the larger framework of the discriminatory attitude by the Ashkenazim towards the Mizrahi. The weak economic position of the Mizrahi made them more dependent on government decisions and control than the Ashkenazim. Many of the Ashkenazim, on the other hand, had the financial stability to purchase houses built by private or Histradut owned farms or houses, which were larger or built at centrally located areas instead of deserts. This
difference in the quality of housing became a permanent feature of differentiation between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim.\textsuperscript{57}

The vast majority of Mizrahim immigrants were without any previous training in farming. The government attempted to overcome this liability through “plantation” or “managed farm” technique. In this arrangement, the immigrants work for wages in land which eventually will be leased to them. But unfortunately that never happened for years. The contractor employed by Histradut or Jewish Agency was solely interested in running a profitable agricultural enterprise. The wage in agricultural sector was very low and the agricultural laborers received the lowest wages in the country. The wages of female laborers who did most of the packing and picking jobs were especially low.\textsuperscript{58}

The expansion and development of agriculture was accompanied by the growth of a network of ownership and the control by private farmers, the Histradut, the Jewish Agency and governmental bureaucracy. All these bodies were mainly dominated by Ashkenazim. Meanwhile, the Mizrahim became a relatively cheap, mobile and manipulate labour force. Though wages in constructions were a bit higher than those in industry and in agriculture at that time, but the social benefits like social security and increments were fewer.

\begin{table}
\centering
\caption{Immediate Occupation after Migration}
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|}
\hline
                       & Frequency | Percent  \\
\hline
Agricultural Labour   & 24        | 13.3     \\
Factory Worker        & 14        | 7.8      \\
Construction Worker   & 33        | 18.3     \\
Student               & 66        | 36.7     \\
Sabras                & 43        | 23.9     \\
Total                 & 180       | 100.0    \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{58} Eric Cohen, “Ethnicity and Legitimation in Contemporary Israel”, \textit{The Jewish Quarterly}, No. 28, summer 1983, pp. 113-115.
Most of the Cochini immigrants were wage labourers in the *Ashkenazi* owned agricultural enterprises, construction companies and factories. Though they were settled in *Moshav*, agricultural control and the authority of the *Moshavim* lands were vested with the Jewish Agency or Histradut. Majority of the Cochini males were engaged in menial jobs like constructing roads, buildings, cannals and in the agricultural land. The Moshav lands were cultivated by agricultural companies controlled by the *Ashkenazim* and need for wage labourers were greatest in seasonal crops such as citrus, and grapes.\(^{59}\)

An Indian journalist Saumedranath Tagore, who visited Nivatim in 1967, gave the following account:

> On December 6, 1967, I visited *Moshav* Nivatim and there were around 80 Cochini families. The settlement was still in the making compared to other *Moshav* and it looked very shabby. I talked with some of the inmates of the *Moshav* and learnt that most of them are agricultural labourers in their own land.\(^{60}\)

Table 3.10 shows that out of all the respondents, 13.3 percent were agricultural labourers, 7.8 percent were factory workers and 18.3 percent were construction workers in the initial period. At the same time, 36.7 percent of the Cochin Jews were students since they were children during the time of migration. According to this table, the majority of the Cochinis like *Mizrahim* were engaged in low level jobs or were daily wage labourers as pointed out by scholars such as Alex Weingrod and Sammy Smooha. Their life was very hard and the income was very low. Majority of the respondents indicated that they and their parents faced a totally unexpected life in Israel. This table once again proves that the Jews of Cochin had to enter the low strata of economic activity for the minimum subsistence. According to Deborah Bernstein, the Mizrachim Moshavs or development towns served as a reserve for agricultural and manual labourers. Instead of Moshavs becoming self-sustained, democratic co-operative units they become a source of cheap labour for the Ashkenazi elites.


Rivka Yohannan recalled the initial days:

In the morning all the male members in the Moshav will wait in front of the Moshav gate for job contractors. They took them in trucks outside the Moshav to work in agricultural land or in construction sites. Gradually women also joined the men in working outside the moshav as daily wage labourers. We had to work from 7 in the morning to 6 in the evening. We used to get 3 Lira per day and it was not enough for our livelihood. Not every day we worked due to the unavailability of the jobs. The elders suffered a lot as hard work like lifting stones, cutting woods and digging canals were not familiar to them. Moreover most of them were physically weak.

Yohannan of Kefar Yuval added:

In the beginning I worked as a shepherd in a huge farm owned by Polish people. Life was very hard. I used to wake up before sunrise and take out the flock to pasture, 8 to 10 km away from home. Many times the soldiers harassed me mistaking me as Arab. My income was not enough for the large family. Later on, my wife and mother also started working as agriculture workers.

Meir Yafeh of Aviezer pointed that

In Alma, we were wage labourers in tobacco farms. It was very difficult since we never had any experience in manual jobs. I stopped going to school because my parents were suffering at the hands of Ashkenazi instructors and they were not able to meet their demands. Many elders died of hard work in the cold climate but their sufferings had been unnoticed. Then we came to Aviezer. Here too we battled with the same condition and unemployment was a major issue in the hilly settlements since commuting to the cities for jobs of our choice was impossible without the support of instructors. So we remained as hired agricultural labourers in the Moshavs or near by Kibbutz. In fact, the immigrants who
had better connection with the old timers especially Ashkenazim, received good jobs and assistance.

The overall occupational position evolved in Israel in 1950s on these lines. The Ashkenazi officials made the Mizrahi completely dependent on the government agencies. Most of the high ranking positions were controlled and dominated by the Ashkenazi and the Mizrahi had very few informal ties which were an important channel for finding work. Having such informal connections either among Histradut or with party functionaries or directly among employees was a great asset which the Ashkenazi had over the Mizrahi and which made Mizrahi much more dependent on the labour market.61

Table 3.11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacles faced in securing Job</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language + Technical Skills</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language + Education</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language + Location of Residence</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.11 describes the obstacles or major difficulties faced by the respondents in finding a suitable job. The Cochin Jews faced many difficulties initially like language, climate, food, technical skills, discrimination, and location of residence. Table 3.11 shows that 33.9 percent of respondents felt language and technical skills as major difficulty in securing the job, while 19.4 percent described language alone as a major obstacle in finding jobs. In addition, 12.2 percent pointed language and education as a major problem in finding a suitable job and only 5 percent pointed lack of language and

location of residence as obstacles in getting proper employment. While 29.4 percent did not respond to the question. The table clearly indicates that lack of knowledge in Hebrew language and technical skills as major weak points of the Cochin Jews in economic integration. In addition, due to the geographically segregated environment and the homogeneous atmosphere in the agricultural settlements, initially the Cochini immigrants had little chances to learn or converse in Hebrew, although adult classes were run in the evenings. The inability to communicate in Hebrew language had literally isolated the Cochinis from the rest of the mainstream population to a great extent. Till today most of the Cochini elders are not very fluent in Hebrew and they are highly dependent on their children for the official correspondence. Till the late 1970s, most of the Cochinis communicated with each other in Malayalam and later the children who went to Israeli schools gradually switched over to Hebrew. It is interesting to note that that around 50 percent of the respondents responded to the interviews in Malayalam. Moreover the Cochinis who lacked technical skills and generally less educated had no other option but to do menial jobs.

The Cochin Jews had to undergo lots of sufferings in Israel contrary to their expectation. The lack of proficiency in Hebrew language, lack of education and the patronage had hampered the economic prospects of Cochin Jews to a great extent. The geographical dispersion policy of the Israeli government has further isolated the miniscule community like Cochinis. The Mizrachim immigrants like Cochinis had less alternative with regard to choice of residence and other socio economic decisions. The Cochin Jews were the direct victims of the prejudice and discriminatory policies of the Ashkenazim community especially with regard to the settlement pattern. Ironically the community who left India to the land of “milk and honey” was wage labourers for more than a decade in the new land. The community with no agrarian experience had to settle in agricultural settlements shows the arbitrary absorption policy of the Israeli government.

AGRICULTURAL LIFE OF THE COCHIN JEWS

Israeli Sociologist Kushner Gilbert described the Cochin Jews in Israel as “administered communities” or communities whose social, cultural and economic development was directed by the outside agencies. These agencies included the Ministry of Agriculture, the
settlement department, the water planning authority, the Jewish National Fund, the Bank of Israel, the Ministries of Health, Labor, and Defense with the settlement department acting as the executive arm in the villages. The co-operative nature of the villages based on nuclear family as the primary socio economic unit was often completely new to the immigrant which was “import from without”.62

In Moshav, while each family owns its own land and occupies its own houses, purchasing and marketing of supplies and produce is organized co-operatively by the giant marketing co-operative Tnuva. The villagers had to buy and sell agricultural products and supplies though Tnuva. Vegetables like tomato, cucumber, cauliflower, squash and beans are original crops and their rotation throughout the year was determined by outside agencies or Tnuva. The immigrants in Moshavs were permitted to grow other crops as they choose, though not guaranteed or purchase by Tnuva. The agricultural product of Moshav is turned over to various marketing co-operatives, and a record is made of each family’s portion. Once the goods are sold the Moshav authorities deduct the debits (for equipment, water and electricity), each family receives its net cash amount. What the villagers will produce, how much he may produce, and at what times of the year, are all determined not by the immigrants in Moshav but by the outside agencies. Quotas for land use, water use and price for products are set by the outside agencies so that Moshav is generated a minimum value for its goods. Such arrangements made the Moshavs not only an artificial community but also an extremely dependent one.63

A five person VAAD (Village Council) headed by a secretary regulate the day to day activities of the Moshav. It is supposed to be responsible for the management of daily affairs, representing the village to outside agencies and participating in planning matters affecting the community. But for years the VAAD was a puppet in the hands of the settlement department. They justified this act pointing that the Mizrachim from the Asia-African countries lack administrative skills and democratic process is alien to them. The instructors appointed by the Jewish Agency controlled the VAAD indirectly, though the

VAAD had serious difference with their interventions. As Scholars like Moshe Lissak pointed out, the village instructors are expected to implement the directive of the masters (settlement department, Jewish Agency or Political Moshav Federations) and did not address the immigrants' immediate needs. Each Moshav was affiliated to different political federations like Thennuat Ha Moshaveem (Mapai) and Hapoel Ha Mizrachi (National Religious Party).

By the end of 1960s, the Jewish Agency distributed the lands of the Moshavs to the Cochini families due to immense pressure from the young generation as they refused to work as wage labourers outside the Moshavs. Mr. Meir Simeon of the Nivatim Moshav pointed that in the beginning Cochinis who lacked education and language skills did not fight with the settlement department and continued as wage labourers. But the young generation, mostly from agricultural schools, demanded that land should be distributed among families for independent cultivation. In Nivatim and Kefar Yuval, the settlement department gave 5 dunas of land to each family. But the hilly settlements like Mesillat Zion, Taoz and Aviezer had limited land and each family was given 2 dunas for cultivation. Later in 1970, these Moshavs were given more land annexed from Jordan after the six days war of 1967.

The Nivatim Moshav was started with 130 Cochin families in 1957 and the location was least suited in Israel for agriculture-salty sand, with little water available and buffeted by freezing desert nights and hot days. The elderly respondents reported that life in Nivatim was horrible in the beginning with no electricity and water and frequent dust storms of desert. The Cochinis first tried to cultivate vegetables-mostly potatoes and onions, but did not succeed because the soil was very salty. By 1965, many families went to other Cochini Moshavs like Taoz and Moshav Ofer from Moshav Nivatim as they could not adjust with the climate. Going on the assumption that the immigrants would be unable to cope with their farms, the settlement department handed over the Moshav lands to an agricultural company and the Cochinis remained as the employees of the company. The economic situation in Nivatim was very bad compared to other Moshavs as the factories and industries were far away from the Moshav and commuting to development towns for

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jobs was almost impossible. This made them highly dependent on the agriculture or to work as manual laborers for many years in the farms. But by the end of 1960s many young people, who were trained in agricultural schools, joined their parents in agriculture and the economic situation slowly changed. They made use of the modern agricultural techniques and slowly took control of the Moshav from the elders. The village was then granted an allocation of 200 laying hens per family unit. The poultry branch itself was subject to difficulties due to electricity failures and other diseases. By the 1970s, they started cultivating various vegetables and flowers like olive, cabbage, oranges, onion, potatoes, cucumber and so on. The respondents reported that from the mid 1970s onwards the Moshav turned towards horticulture and it was a big success until the economic recession of 1986-86.

Yitzhak Nehemia explained to me the details of the horticulture:

Most of the families had green houses till mid 1990s and flowers are meant only for export, and hence have to satisfy the choices and requirements of the European customers. Flowers are cut, made into bundles and bouquets, wrapped in polythene papers and kept in the cold rooms. There used to be a depot in the Moshav where the trucks of marketing agencies came once or twice a week to take the cargo. Flowers from Nivatim were mainly exported to Netherlands. It was a very profitable business. Even we used to travel to Europe to visit flower markets to learn more about horticulture. Besides these, Nivatim had a few green houses also for tomatoes and cucumbers. What you are seeing in Nivatim today, cars, houses, cooking equipments all these were purchased during that period.

The situation of Kefar Yuval in Upper Galilee was more or less same in the beginning. It is only the border settlement, which faced horrendous experiences. It was this jungle in the beginning with rock and fig trees. The settlement authorities allotted 5 dunas each to the immigrants in 1968 but most of them were wage laborers as the cultivation was controlled by the settlement department for a long period. Initially many Cochini families were given herds of sheep and the males members worked as shepherds for many years.
Like in Nivatim, by the late 1960s the young generation forced the Jewish Agency to relieve them from the manual jobs and started working in their own land. They started cultivating vegetables and fruits like cucumber, capsicum, tomato, carrot, cabbage, apple, olive, grape, orange, apricot and so on. By the late 1970s, they started poultry business along with agriculture as the income from agriculture was not enough for their subsistence. Then in 1970, the Jewish Agency appointed some Cochin youths who were trained from the agricultural schools as Madrichs or the instructors of the Moshav. Later each family received around 15 to 20 dunas of land exclusively for cultivating fruits. As mentioned before, commuting to other areas was a major problem in Kefar. Two families were given one horse cart for transportation. Yudha Hai the manager of Kefar Yuval pointed that the income from the agriculture was not at all enough in the beginning which is one of the reasons why they turned to poultry. But the poultry is a very hard job and it needs regular attention. In many families, the ladies took care of the poultry and men worked in the field.

Another major problem in the Moshav Kefar Yuval was regular terrorist raids and shelling since it was very close to the Lebanese border. The respondents pointed out that until Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 1998 the situation was horrific and scary. Many times the Moshav was caught between the cross firing and many were injured. In addition, missiles and rockets hit the Moshav very frequently. By the late 1960, bunkers were constructed in the Moshav by the Ministry of Defence to protect the immigrants from the missiles and rockets. Nehemia Nehemia of Kefar Yuval explained:

During armed conflicts in the border, the Cochin immigrants had to stay 2 to 3 days in bunkers. During the enemy raids the males had to take weapons and guard the Moshav at night in spite of their hard work during the day. This had created a great fear in the minds of our children.

In 1974, the Lebanon army killed 13 Cochinis in Kefar Yuval and many were injured. By the 1970s, the younger generation came back to the Moshav after completing their certificate courses in agriculture to help their patents who were physically weak and lacked agricultural skills. Another respondent Yosef Samuel, the leader of Kefar Yuval recalled:
For many years until the beginning of 1970s, the Cochinis failed miserably in the agriculture and the Jewish Agency lost all their hope in us. They encouraged us to join industrial sectors as wage labourers and to abandon agriculture. But we fought with the Jewish Agency and convinced them to give us a chance to prove ourselves. With great difficulty they finally agreed. We worked very hard as the soil of Galilee hills has high salt content and the yield was very low. Water was a major issue here in the beginning. The hotter climate, low rainfall and seasonal snow falls—all demand a corresponding higher level of irrigation than that is needed in other areas of Israel.

One of the young respondents of Kefar Yuval, Yossi Yosef noted:

None of the Cochini elders were aware of the danger of this location before settling in this place. Though they tried to move to other places, the settlement department lured them with great hopes and promises. Now all of us have houses and lands here and we don't have any other choice but to stay in this isolated settlement. I am a gardener in private houses as I couldn’t study much due to the economic constraints unlike the youth in the cities.

At the same time, the Cochini Moshavs in the Judean hills MesillatZion, Taoz and Aviezer were totally cut off from the main regions until the 1967 war. The Cochinis were mainly labourers, employed under different construction companies until 1967 as all the Moshavs had limited cultivable land. The hard work like loading stones and bricks and making canals and roads were totally alien to the Cochinis. The Cochin Jews, who were relatively weak, suffered too much in the new environment as they expected quite a different atmosphere in the “Land of Cannan.” The wages in the construction and the industrial sectors were the lowest, later women also went to work outside the moshavs as the income of one person was not sufficient for large Cochini families. Some respondents pointed that the old people who never did hard work in Kerala, had to work in Israel in spite of the adverse climatic conditions. From the Moshavs the trucks would collect the laborers at 7 am in the morning and leave them back by 7 or 8 pm in the evening.
depending on the availability of the labourers for the next shift. At the same time, education of the children was also affected since parents never had time and proper understanding to guide or to teach their children. The documents show that the teachers of the Moshav schools constantly complained about the non-seriousness of the Cochinis towards their children’s education.

In all these three hilly Moshavs, the Cochinis were introduced to both agriculture and poultry. Each family had its own poultry clustered at a distance from the houses. Poultry here was meant for eggs. The representatives of marketing organization used to come in regular intervals to collect the eggs. In the beginning most of the households raised egg and meat laying chicken and many of them also raised fattened ducks and turkeys. In addition, they were given training in maintaining vineyards and almonds by the settlement department since the Judean hill was suitable for fruit cultivation. I was told that farming had become a hard and strenuous job. As a result, several families were confined to the income from poultry for years. In the beginning the Cochinis tried to raise vegetables like potatoes but they failed because of their lack of experience in farming. But most of the men till mid 1960 worked as agriculture-poultry wage labourers in the Moshavs and women were more involved in raising chickens and ducks. All these settlements had instructors but the Cochinis in general couldn’t adjust with the directions of instructors and many instructors were unhappy with the Cochin Jews.

The Israeli sociologist who did research on the Cochinis in Moshav Taoz noted:

The agriculture and poultry instructor of Taoz quit his job when I visited the village in 1967 and they were very reluctant to learn proper farming. The agricultural instructor, for his part, could not remember a season the Cochin farmers had begun and ended their work according to the department’s schedule. The agriculture and poultry instructors complained that the Cochinis always prepared the land shabbily and carelessly, never took good care of the growing vegetables, harvested late and constantly produced half the yield possible. The standards of cleanliness for the
chicken crops and methods of care and feeding were, he claimed, poor and inefficient. The chickens were ill housed.\textsuperscript{65}

The Cochin \textit{Moshav}s in Judea hills were never dependent fully on agriculture as they had very few land. Later these Moshav\textit{s} got additional land in Latrun (annexed from Jordan in 1967) and they cultivated it collectively. Latrun is very far from the \textit{Moshav}s and they found it very difficult to cultivate it due the lack of transportation in the beginning. Gradually the agricultural land in Latrun was given to an agricultural company for lease and it continues till now. The portion of the profit is equally divided among the families after deducting the expenses.

**PRESENT EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE COCHIN JEWS**

The law of compulsory education was enacted in 1949 in Israel, stipulating a compulsory period of 9 years of schooling for all, free of charge, starting at the age of five. This period was lengthened in 1969 to 11 years. Elementary schools were opened in rural localities and in every urban neighborhood. However there is a considerable gap in the educational level of the two main ethnic groups—\textit{Ashkenazim} and \textit{Mizrachim}. During the 1960s, illiteracy rate among the \textit{Mizrachim} was nine times higher than that of the \textit{Ashkenazi}. According to Judah Matras, “It is probably correct to note that even at the primary school level, the support, assistance, encouragement, leverage and sponsorship that the Asian or African origin child in the 1960s or the 1970s was able to command from his parents or nearby community of orientation was considerably less, on the average, than that to which the European or American origin child had access.”\textsuperscript{66} This was so both because of the disadvantages of the \textit{Mizrachim} children and families in the per capita resources available (income, parent’s educational attainment, housing density, numbers of siblings, etc.) and because of lesser familiarity and lesser ability of the \textit{Mizrachim} families to deal with teachers and school situations that were largely organized by Europeans.


In the early period itself, all the eligible children of the Cochinis of different Moshavs attended the Moshav Kindergarten and Moshav schools. In Moshavs, the schools were religiously oriented and taught traditional rituals as well as secular western style curriculum, but the standard of these schools was very low. From 1956, civilian teachers came to Moshavs two evening a week to conduct classes in Hebrew for adults. Many of the Cochini boys went to the state supported technical and agricultural boarding schools in other parts of the country, returning to the village in holidays. Most of the girl children didn't join the schools outside the Moshav or stopped their education. Few studied in agricultural schools and came back to the Moshav to help their parents.

The data shows that (as indicated in Chapter2) majority of the respondents (26.7 percent), have completed their Agricultural School certificate, while 25.0 percent had primary education, 17.8 percent completed vocational and technical courses and 21.7 percent of the respondents did 10 years of schooling. The data further indicates that 4.4 percent of the respondents are graduates while, 1.1 percent is postgraduates and 0.6 percent is professionals. It is significant to note that majority of the respondents of the age group 60-70 and 51-59 (44.7 percent) are graduates of Agricultural School certificate course. As mentioned in the previous chapter, of the total graduates, majority belongs to the age group 40-50 (62.5 percent) and 100 percent of the respondents with post graduation belong to the respondents aged 40-50. However, only 6.1 percent of the total respondents have university education and only 2.8 percent have completed higher secondary or 12 years of schooling. The data with regard to female spouses shows that out of the total female spouses, 47.9 percent did not complete high school, while 24.3 percent have completed high school or class X, 12.1 percent did vocational programme, 10.7 percent of the respondents completed higher secondary education, 3.6 percent were graduates and only 1.4 percent have agricultural school certificates.

Data show that there is a marginal difference between the Israeli born Cochinis and the older generation. The factors that hampered the educational growth of the Cochin Jews are geographical isolation, stronger inclination towards religious education, economic constraints, lack of motivation towards higher education, the lack of quality education in the Moshavs among others. As mentioned before, the Cochinis, like other Mizrachim were sent to isolated frontier areas or the Negev regions. The academic standard of the
schools in the rural areas were lower than the schools in the cities. There was a general ignorance toward the rural schools as majority of the students were Mizrahim. The rural schools were almost segregated from the mainstream community, provided low quality educational services, 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 scholastic achievements and the Mizrachim students did not perform well in their studies, especially in the high schools. Initially the Cochin Jews preferred to send their children in religious schools and many of the respondents mentioned that the standard of the Moshav schools were very low.

Simeon Meir of Moshav Taoz said:

The settlement department sent all the children to schools in the beginning. But our parents who were uneducated did not know anything other than religious education. Many of the Cochini children did not perform well in the schools as the atmosphere was totally alien and curricula were very tough. Teachers did not take special care of the weak students as they already had stereotype image about us as primitive and backward. Finally, all who were slightly good in studies were sent to agricultural schools and the decision in this regard was taken by the officials without our consent. The agricultural programme is not a certificate programme and it does not have any value like other programmes. We are happy that we got some education but what we received is not relevant in the present job market. When the agriculture collapsed, we faced great difficulty in finding a new job since we didn’t have proper education.

Moreover, most of the Mizrahim students were not absorbed in the schools in which the children of veteran Ashkenazim studies, as they were coming from “primitive culture.” In 1961, 35 percent of Mizrahim first graders failed to move to the second, partly due to the negligence of the government. To overcome the crisis, the Ministry of Education of Israel established “compensatory education” of the type then being applied in the United States.
to the African Americans.\textsuperscript{67} The impact of this reform was the establishment of vocational and agricultural high schools with low standard and diluted curriculum. The data of Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel shows that during the period between 1961 and 1972 the proportion of those who were studying in vocational-agricultural schools, increased from 26 to 48 percent and most of the students belonged to the Mizrahim community.\textsuperscript{68} The renowned Israeli scholar Yohannan Peres pointed that, “it should be emphasized that in contemporary societies the very existence of ethnic inequality is the major issue, while the fact that a group that is economically deprived is also likely to be less educated and located in less desirable areas only sharpens the sense of injustice towards that group.”\textsuperscript{69}

The inferior accomplishments of the Mizrahim are very evident in higher education. They are underrepresented in Masters and Doctoral studies, engineering, natural and mathematical sciences and especially in medicine. Though the gap between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim are reducing at the educational levels, considerable gap persists at the post-secondary and university levels. On the other hand, we find striking differences between the percentages of different groups in agricultural high schools. In 1966-67 approximately 70 percent of all students in agricultural/trade schools were Mizrahim.\textsuperscript{70} The most plausible cause for these differences are apparently, firstly, flight of European youth from agriculture, secondly may be that agricultural schools not only do not grant matriculation certificate but are also considered extremely backward regarding their educational standard. About two third of the Mizrahim in the post primary education attended trade schools and only one third attended academic schools.

Economic constraints were another factor that hampered the educational level of the Cochinis. The older generation, having no previous experience in agriculture had to work very hard in the Moshavim for survival. Many respondents reported that they stopped education mainly to help their parents in agriculture. Another major factor was the large


\textsuperscript{69} Ibid, p. 151.

family size and low income as most of Cochinis like Mizrahim were wage labourers and income of the parents were not sufficient to finance the children’s education. At the same time, the parents who were mostly less educated didn’t encourage their children to acquire more education. For them, the immediate task was to meet the daily needs. Daniel of Moshav Taoz stated:

I discontinued my studies because of the sufferings of my parents in Moshav in Negev desert. Until we (young generation) grew up, most of the elders were agricultural wage labourers in the Moshav or managing their own farms under the direction of settlement department since our elders didn't have much knowledge about the framing and modern agricultural techniques. We had large families and the income of one person was not enough to manage the daily expenses. So, most of the young people didn't opt for higher education.

Rebecca Eliyahu of Moshav Ofer said:

The Cochini women are least educated group when compare to other Indian Jewish communities. The BenelIsraelis and Baghdadi women had basic education before migrating to Israel. Our parents didn’t encourage the girls to study in the beginning. I was interested to continue my studies but my mother was sick and I had to take care of my younger siblings. The important factor was financial crisis. Though education was free for all, higher education, including the technical courses was very expensive. I feel the main reason for our educational backwardness was the Moshav oriented agricultural life of Cochinis. The Cochinis didn’t visualize their life beyond being a farmer and they did not pay adequate attention to education. Later, some women went to teaching schools and nursing but not all. Now the situation is improving and I believe the younger generation will improve the image of Cochinis.

A closer examination of the breakdown according to sex and period of immigration reveals several tendencies. Firstly, the ethnic gap is greater among the women because of the tradition of the educational deprivation of the Mizrachim women. Secondly, the gap
cut across all immigrant groups as it is comparatively lower among all the Israeli born due to compulsory primary education. Thirdly, the largest ethnic disparity lies at the extreme end of educational scale. The illiteracy rate among Orientals was ten times as high as Ashkenazim rate, as majority of the adults from Asian and African countries came without any schooling and later they were dispersed in isolated regions which further hampered the educational progress of the second generation though there is a slight improvement of late. In addition, a significant number of Mizrachim were not able to achieve high school certificate and their poor performance in education was due to the factors like lack of guidance at home and discrimination by teachers at schools.

PRESENT OCCUPATION AND INCOME OF THE COCHINI IMMIGRANTS

Compared with the Ashkenazim, the Mizrachim are disadvantaged in terms of their participation in the labour force but the more serious ethnic discrepancies concern the kinds of jobs they hold. The Mizrachim were overrepresented in the menial and blue collar jobs than the Ashkenazim. In 1954, 19.8 percent of the Mizrachim and 42.9 percent of the Ashkenazim were engaged in white collar occupations. In 1975, the percentage was 32.2 and 57.7 respectively. In 1954, 65.6 percent of the Mizrachim and 19.4 percent of the Ashkenazim held blue collar jobs, whereas in 1975 their proportion was 42.0 and 28.9 percents respectively; and the rest being Arabs.\(^{71}\)

As a result of the decline in the total labor force engaged in agriculture in the country, many Mizrahim took up low status jobs like security, driver, gardener, factory worker and so on. But the Ashkenazi has enjoyed the same and even greater mobility. For instance, according to one survey, the proportion of the Ashkenazi unskilled workers dropped dramatically from 41.7 percent in 1957-58 to 20.2 in 1963-64 and further to 12.8 percent in 1982-83.\(^{72}\) This inequality in occupational mobility suggests the existence of a hardcore Mizrachim proletariat along with the Arabs which included a great many immobile, unskilled workers who are apparently uneducated, have large families and are heavily concentrated in underdeveloped areas.


\(^{72}\) Ibid, p. 29.
The studies of inter generational mobility in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s report that the rate of occupational mobility of the *Ashkenazim* is about twice that of the *Mizrachim*, and the inequality is even greater among sons of low economic status parents. The *Ashkenazim* representation in 1980 in white collar jobs was about twice that of the *Mizrachim*. Till today the *Mizrahim* sabras (Israeli born) are struggling to catch up with their already underachieving older generation, while the *Ashkenazi* sabras, who already measure up to the high standards of their parents are striving to reach greater heights.\(^{73}\) A study of occupational distribution in 1961 and 1970 conducted by Hartman and Eilon reveals a trend of consolidating ethnic stratification. It is found that the chances for belonging to the top occupational categories were unequal for *Mizrachim* and *Ashkenazim* despite equal length of stay in the country and almost equal years of schooling.

As mentioned above, upon their arrival majority of the Cochin Jews went to agricultural settlements or *Moshav* and they started this career as wage labourers. By the 1970s, many of them started agriculture independently in their own lands. In Nivatim they experimented with production of many vegetables and finally switched over to horticulture. With the help of the marketing agencies (*Tnuva*) and the Ministry of Agriculture, they set up huge green houses especially for rose cultivation and also cultivated agricultural crops like tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, mustards, olives, apples and so on.

Haim Simeon, one of the respondents told that it was a Herculean task to work in the desert as the climate is very bad and they had to depend on outside agencies for water. Gradually agricultural conditions improved by the late 1970s and most of the Cochin Jews gave up their outside jobs and devoted themselves entirely to farming. Agriculture in *Moshav* Nivatim was relatively profitable from 1975 to 1988. Flowers were exported to European countries through *Tnuva* and many families even visited the flower markets in Holland and Amsterdam to see the flower industries. Gradually the standard of living also changed and between 1980 and 1988 many families bought cars, tractors, household

articles and other equipments for farming. During this period, most of the families had repaired their old houses and some build new houses by taking loans.

In the 1970s and 1980s, all the Cochinis of Moshav Nivatim were farmers and the whole families including women were fully involved in farming. But the economic recession of Israel in the mid 1980s, the fluctuation of oil prices, less demand for Israeli flowers in the European market, the privatization policies of Israel and the reduction of subsidies hampered the agricultural sector drastically. The privatization process though began in the 1970s, reached its peak in the mid 1980s. In 1985 stabilization programme transferred the agricultural oriented economy of Israel to market based industrial economy and all the cooperative agricultural settlements were in a deep crises. Earlier the Moshav authorities had taken loans from the banks for agriculture as the banks have special package to credit co-operatives for farming. In the 1980s, the African countries started flower production with the help of European MNCs and this created tough competition in the European market for Israeli flowers. Finally the African flower which is relatively cheap dominated the European market. It was a great set back for the Israeli farmers.

By 1990 the Moshav Nivatim had debts of more than four million dollars and the Moshav authorities transferred the credit to individual families disregarding their ability to repay loans on the terms received. The deep recession made the government to withdraw all the subsidies and 95 percent of the Cochinis in Nivatim plunged into huge debts. Most of the families stopped farming as the prices crashed and income from agriculture became very low. Many respondents pointed that the more loss they had incurred, the more loans they took thinking that economic situation will be alright, but the reality was something different. The hike in water and electricity tariffs was a major jolt to the Cochinis as green houses were highly dependent on both water and electricity. The marketing agencies stopped taking the flowers and refused to take the responsibility of exporting the cargo. It was very difficult financially for small farmers like Cochinis who lacked managerial experience to manage both farming and exporting. The respondents mentioned that for months they were forced to sell flowers at cheap rate as storage capacity of the cold rooms of Cochini farmers was very limited. The unexpected financial crisis, in fact, created frictions and conflicts within the community as the members started blaming the VAAD members for mismanaging the affairs.
Shalom Benyamin, a former VAAD member narrated the difficult period to me:

In the beginning of 1980s, the horticulture business was a success and not all families were involved in this in the initial stage. But seeing the potential of the horticulture, most of the families who were not financially sound, took huge amount of loans to set up green houses for flower cultivation. It was impossible to cultivate flowers in the Mediterranean climate without green houses. The Irgun Kinyot (Economic office of Moshavim) arranged loans for the farmers. Besides, many members took extra loans to modify or build houses and to purchase cars, tractors and other household equipments thinking that they can repay the loans. But the reality we had to face was something different. The economic recession of the mid 1980s and the privatization- liberalization policy of the government literally pushed the small farmers like us into a deep crisis. Many families till now have huge debts despite waiving of loans by the government and half their income goes to repay the loans. Three to five families sold their houses and belongings to private agricultural companies due to their inability to repay loans.

In the beginning of 1990 many Cochin Jews families in Nivatim stopped farming and took low status jobs outside moshav like factory workers, security, drivers, mechanics, gardeners, clerks and so on. Today the Moshav Nivatim is a barren desert with the ruins of green houses all over. Only three to five families are still engaged in agriculture.

Neema yaron, one of the respondents told:

Our life once again became tough as the income from agriculture suddenly reduced. We had huge debts and the government strictly ordered us to repay the loans. Most of us didn't know any job other than agriculture and it was very difficult for us to find new jobs. Many joined as securities and some started working in the arms factories in Dimona near Beersheba. But more than half the income went to repay loans and I repaid the entire amount only in 2002.
The situation is same in the cases of all the Cochini moshavs. The Moshav Kefar Yuval also suffered economically with the collapse of the agricultural sector. Many families still have huge loans to pay and sold their vehicles and other equipments to repay loans. The Cochini families in Kefar Yuval today shifted from agriculture and are fully engaged in raising Chickens. Each family has more than 1000 Chicken and the government provides extra money (one Shekel) for each egg since they reside in the borders. In addition, the government also provided them loans to make Zimarim (Tourist Resorts) to rent it to the tourists who visits Galilee and Golan heights. The government is still very skeptical that the Cochinis will leave the Moshav because of the deep agrarian crisis. Because of this, the government provides subsidies and special loans for the existence of the Moshav and the presence of Cochinis is very important for security reasons. Today majority of the respondents from Kefar Yuval are working in the factories in Kiryat Shemona (nearest development town). Many youngsters who are less educated due to the geographical isolation are also working as factory workers, mechanics, technicians, gardeners and drivers.

The Cochini Moshavs in Judean hills, Taoz, Mesilatzion and Aviaer also went through the same crisis as explained by the Nivatim and Kefar Yuval Moshavs. Majority of the families in all these three Moshavs also had debts but not like Nivatim farmers since the Cochinis of these Moshavs did not take huge amount of loans for horticulture unlike the Nivatim farmers. In Taoz and Mesillat Zion and Aviezer, mainly the farmers used to cultivate fruits and vegetables and raised chickens. In all the three Moshavs, each family had only 2 Dunas near the house and rest was far away from the Moshav. This was a great problem for the farmers to manage the farm individually. So in all these three Moshavs they had leased out the land to agricultural companies. But the fluctuation of the poultry prices, hard labour, and the seasonal diseases of chickens also led the poultry business into a crisis. Gradually they stopped poultry and agriculture and most of them are now depended on "outside employment." Most of the Cochinis from all these three Moshavs are working in nearby development towns like Bethshemesh and Ashdod.
Yaron of Aviezer said:

The co-operative institutions like Irgun Kinyot and the financial department led by the Labor Party looted the moshav money, the finances were managed very badly and loans were taken in our names without informing us. Every year they made us sign some documents but only later we understood that we had so much debts. The agricultural life has ruined us and we couldn't even give proper education to our children. Today we don't know any job other than agriculture, which was imposed on us. We barely survive and many families have debts. This crisis is because of the mismanagement of the Labor Party.

Data show that majority of the respondents are engaged in blue collar jobs or low paid jobs like factory worker, security, driver, police, clerks, kindergarten teacher and so on. Out of the total respondents, 33.3 percent are pensioners, followed by factory workers (21.7 percent), security/drivers (16.1 percent), clerk/nurse-secretary (11.1 percent), farmers (8.9 percent), manager/senior officers (4.4 percent), police/army (3.3 percent) and others (0.6 percent). Factory workers are the largest occupational group which is around 21.7 percent of the total respondents and 0.6 percent of the total respondents (only one person) is professional. It is important to note that only 8.9 percent of the total respondents are engaged in farming in spite of staying in Moshavs. In the light of the above data, majority of the respondents aged 40-50 are mainly engaged in two main occupations—factory workers and clerical jobs or nurses and only 4.7 percent of the total younger generation, aged 40-50, are engaged in farming. At the same time, out of the total respondents of the age group 51-59, 34.0 percent are farmers, 23.4 percent are factory workers, 8.5 percent are engaged in occupations like clerks/nurses/secretary and only 8.5 percent are in the managerial positions. This shows the drastic shift in the occupational structure of the Cochin Jews. It is very significant to mention that only 5 percent of the total respondents are in the white collar jobs including manager/senior officers and professionals and rest of them are either holding blue collar jobs or engaged in low status jobs.
The agrarian crisis in Israel had affected the Cochin Jews both socially and economically. Many respondents report that their children couldn't go to universities and didn't receive good education mainly because of the economic crisis. When they stopped agriculture they faced great difficulty in securing new jobs since they were not educated or skilled labourers. This has forced the Cochinis to enter into the low status and low paid jobs. The agrarian crisis has created occupational shift within the Cochinis. Today most of the Cochinis are doing low paid jobs like drivers, securities, factory workers, nurses, kindergarten teachers, police, mechanics, etc. Many respondents in the age group of 51-59 and 60-70 reported that they find it very difficult to adjust with their new job in which they are not skilled.

Currently the younger generation of the Cochin community has developed a negative attitude towards agriculture and almost all of them have moved outside Moshav for jobs. Data shows that most of the respondents aged 40 to 50 are mechanics, technicians, factory workers, security workers, clerks, etc. This shows that the occupational mobility of the Cochin Jews, though they have not reached the higher ranks till now. It is ironic to note that the Cochinis are still underrepresented in white collar occupations like doctor, professional, engineer, scientist, diplomat and academician. There are very few professionals and managers among the Cochin community and the Cochin Jewry's representation in the high ranking services like academicians, diplomats, scientists, high level bureaucrats, journalists, etc. is almost negligible. None of the Cochinis are big entrepreneurs apart from two or three small level businessmen. In addition, the data with regard to the female spouses also shows that majority of the women are engaged in low income or blue collar jobs like factory workers, sales women, kindergarten teachers, nurses, clerks, secretaries and so on. Earlier, most of the Cochin women used to work inside the Moshavs mostly in the family farming or in the poultry. But the agrarian crisis and the huge debts incurred by the families forced the womenfolk to work outside the Moshavs. But the women respondents told that it was more difficult for them to find jobs since they were relatively less educated than men. At this juncture, it is significant to note the findings of Israeli sociologist Shlomo Swirski in 1988: one out of every two Israeli born Ashkenazim had an academic professional or managerial job as compared with every five and a half Israeli born Mizrahim.
In spite of these crises, one Cochini is still successful in farming, Betzalel Eliyahu from Moshav Shahar. In the 1970s and 1980s, Eliyahu was the leading flower exporter of Israel and received Kaplan award for agriculture in 1980. Modern heated green house was first started in Israel in Moshav Shahar by Betzalel and he started farming with two dunas of land and in 1974 he was awarded for running the best and the largest flower exporting unit. In 1965, he went to England to learn more about flower growing process and later gained practical experience in horticulture from Holland. In the beginning of the 1970s, he constructed Israel’s first heated green house for growing rose plants. In 1985-1995 he started an agricultural company named Camptech East Pvt. Ltd., to support and develop modern agriculture in India. He started 3 vegetable green houses in India in Coimbatore, Delhi and Chandigarh worth millions of rupees. But later he closed down the company as it was not profitable. The economic recession and the crisis in agriculture sector also affected Betzalel very badly. In 1994-2000 Betzalel also had to take huge loans to face inflation and the fluctuation in the market. Today he is confined only with one huge greenhouse and his annual turnover is not more than 4 to 5 lakh Dollars. He turned one of the greenhouses into a restaurant and catering Kerala food for the tourists who visit Moshav Shahar. Betzalel is of the opinion that:

The reason for the collapse of Israeli agriculture is mainly the prolonged occupation of Arab territories and the expansion of settlements. Today $70-100 billion are being pumped to build new settlements by reducing the subsidy within Israel for farmers. Earlier a farmer with dirty clothes had some respect in the society. Today that is missing. The Intifada has stopped Arab workers and has severely affected the agrarian sector as we have to depend on foreign workers from Thailand with high salary.

Many studies show that there were greater differences in the income and standard of living between the Ashkenazim and Mizrahim. The educational differences between the immigrants from Europe and America, Asia and Africa have wide ranging effects including in the distribution of employment. Bar Yosef and Padan point out that there is a high concentration of European and American immigrants in prestigious occupations, whereas the immigrants from Asia and Africa are virtually unrepresented in these
occupations. By the end of 1980s, 60 percent of the Mizrachim were low status workers and only a few of Mizrachim succeeded in joining the establishment as a part of the cooptation policy that was adopted to serve the legitimacy of the Ashkenazi dominated system and which was at most a token of good will on the part of the decision makers. According to Israeli scholar Raphael Cohen Almagor, in 1990 32.4 percent of the Israeli born Mizrachim were employed as blue collar workers as compared with only 12.9 percent of the Israeli born Ashkenazim. In addition, by 1990 the Ashkenazi were twice as likely as Mizrachim to reach the top occupational categories. Among the Israeli born Ashkenazi and Mizrachim, the gap was even greater. At this point it is significant to recall the conclusion of one of the studies of Majid Al Haj, in the year 1991-92, 49.4 percent of the Ashkenazim occupied white collar positions like professional, manager and doctors as against 20.8 percent of Mizrachim. Moreover, 32.4 percent of the Israeli born Mizrachim as opposed to 12.9 percent of Israeli born Ashkenazim held lower class occupations in the beginning of 1990s.

The recent study on income among different ethnic groups in Israel by Yinon Cohen and Yitzchak Haber Field show that despite narrowing differentials, in most productivity related measures between Ashkenazi and Mizrachim men, the income gap between the two groups not only failed to converge, but actually widened during the past 25 years. The factors responsible for this situation is changes in earning structure, decline of agriculture, schooling differences, discrimination in the labor market and the effect of privatization since 1985. Yinon Cohan argues that the relatively closing educational gap between the Mizrachim and the Ashkenazim does not guarantee a decline in the earning gap between the two groups. The discrimination in the Israeli labor market, i.e. the Israeli employers’ preference of the Ashkenazim over the Mizrachim has intensified the income gap between the two groups. At the same time, because the top portion of the job market consists of a disproportioned number of Ashkenazim and the bottom portion consists of a disproportioned number of Mizrachim, the inequality is rising resulting in widening the income gap between the two ethnic groups. It is likely that the income inequality and

74 Ibid, p. 94.
75 Raphael Cohen Almagor, no. 1, 480-484
76 Majid Al Haj, Immigration and EthnicFormation in a Deeply Divided Society: The Case of the 1990s Immigrants From the Former Soviet Union in Israel, (Boston, Brill Leiden, 2004), pp. 35-38.
geographical isolation hurt other weak groups in Israeli society such as women, Arabs, and new immigrants compared to the advantageous group in Israeli labor Market—educated Ashkenazi. In his comprehensive study of income inequality in the 1960s, Hanoch states:

Consequently, a substantial social and economic gap developed between the veteran (Ashkenazi) population of the country whose economic position was established over the years and who formed the class that held the major positions in the economic and social institutions and the Mizrachim, who were mostly destitute and in need of support and many of whom were uneducated and lacked technical training on a level suitable for immediately full economic integration into the Israeli society.77

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Table 3.12

Present Occupation and Income of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present Occupation of respondents</th>
<th>Present Income of respondent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1000-4000</td>
<td>4001-8000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensioner</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Occupation of respondent</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Income of respondent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Occupation of respondent</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Income of respondent</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security/Driver</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Occupation of respondent</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Income of respondent</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory worker</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Occupation of respondent</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Income of respondent</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager/Senior Officer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Occupation of respondent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Income of respondent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk/Nurse/Secretary</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Occupation of respondent</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Income of respondent</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police/Army</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Occupation of respondent</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Income of respondent</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Occupation of respondent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Income of respondent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Occupation of respondent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Income of respondent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Occupation of respondent</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Present Income of respondent</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The average income of an Israeli is around NIS 7603 (about $1680). Table 3.12 describes the correlation between the occupation and the income of the respondents. The table shows that all the respondents (100 percent) with the income of 1,000-4,000 shekels are pensioners (100 percent). They are having very low pensions because according to the Israeli law, each citizen will contribute a certain percentage of money towards the social security scheme while earning, and in the end the government will return this amount as pensions. In fact, people invest money in social security according to their income, and people with good income will invest more and with less income will invest less. Finally those who invested more money will get good pension during the retirement period and those who invested less, their return will be obviously less. The Cochinis, who were mainly wage labourers or farmers with low income, naturally invested less amount of money in the social security scheme and this led to low income of pensioners. Many pensioners painfully told that the new economic reforms of the present finance minister Benjamin Netanyahu especially with regard to social security schemes has drastically affected the income and facilities of the elderly people.

The data further suggests that majority of the respondents with income between 4,000-8,000 are mostly engaged in occupations like farming, security, driver, factory worker, clerk, nurse, secretary and police or Army. In addition, the data shows that 33.3 percent of the respondents are clearly below the official per capita income while 52.2 percent of the respondents are either below or in the borderline. At the same time, 11.1 percent of the respondents who with income between 8,000-12,000 shekels are managers (in Moshavs or small enterprises), senior officers or supervisors in factories. In addition only 2.2 percent of the total respondents are drawing between 12,000-16,000 shekels, and are obviously engaged in white collar jobs, are professionals or successful in farming or business. The data show that only a miniscule minority of the total respondents are engaged in white collar jobs or having higher incomes. At the same time, 1.1 percent of the total respondents who are having monthly income of more than 16,000 shekels are either doing farming or business.

CONCLUSION

The study shows that occupational patterns of Cochinis has not been static and varies according to the economic situations of the country. Before immigrating to Israel, the
Cochini community was generally engaged in non skilled occupations like vendors, petty traders and small traders. Upon their arrival to Israel, lack of education and technical skills forced them to enter in menial jobs like agricultural labour, construction worker, and factory worker and so on. Statistics show that nearly for five to six years the Cochin Jews were daily wagers even in their own farms. As Kushner Gilbert pointed out, the Cochin Jewry was an administered community under the directions of Jewish Agency and the settlement department. The lack of knowledge of Hebrew language, technical skills, education, large family size, and stereotype image that they carry contagious tropical diseases, and lack of connections with veteran Ashkenazi community had slowed the economic integration of Cochin Jews in the beginning.

The geographical allocation of Cochin Jews was not according to their choices and the arbitrary dispersion policy of the settlement department had hampered the educational and economic prospects of the community to certain extent. Most of the Moshavs allotted to the Cochinis were in borders, remote, unfit for agriculture, and abandoned by the earlier settlers as it was not suitable for living. Later the Cochinis started agriculture in their own land but they failed miserably in the beginning due to lack of experience and the infertility of the land. However, the second generation, who mostly graduated from the agricultural schools joined their parents in farming and altered the economic profile of the community. But their success in farming did not last long due to the economic recession and mainly because of the privatization-liberalization policy of the government. The agrarian crisis pushed the community into huge debts and once again forced them to change their occupations. By the mid 1990s, the Cochin Jews gradually stopped farming and joined blue collar jobs as security guards, factory worker, driver, gardener, clerks, sales women, secretaries, technicians, mechanics, kindergarten teachers and so on. It is important to note that Cochin Jews are totally underrepresented in white collar jobs like doctors, professionals, academicians, scientists, diplomats, high ranking bureaucrats and so on. It is surprising to see that very few are in the high tech field, in a country that is known for its development in high tech industry. To conclude, the economic status of the Cochin Jewry is neither low nor high, it is middle level income group according to Israeli standards.