CHAPTER II

THE REGION VIEWED FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter an attempt has been made to evaluate the importance of the different factors that have played a significant role in the evolution of the region. The pattern of settlements, their nature and distribution, as we observe today, is the cumulative effect of successive adjustments to changing socio-economic situations. The site and location of these places were, however, guided more by relief and drainage conditions which were important in determining which particular sites and situations were favoured in preference to others. So, while in the early days accessibility, safety from floods, fertile terrain and local availability of water were prime considerations, the medieval period brought socio-economic and strategic factors into play as the overriding considerations.

A) EARLY PERIOD
(7th Century B.C. to 12th Century A.D.)

In prehistoric times, like the rest of the Deccan*, the Bombay - Poona region formed part of the 'Dandakaranya'† sparsely inhabited by aborigines, Bhils and Naga tribes.

* Deccan is generally used as a synonym for peninsular India, also used for the territory between the Narmada and Cauvery rivers.

† Dandakaranya is an archaic word used for India, South of the Vindhyas.
The Aryan penetration of the Deccan took place, as Bhandarkar (1928) suggested, in the beginning of the 7th Century B.C. and their early settlements were tethered to the banks of rivers and their tributaries. The settlements were attracted to these sites essentially because of the fertile soil and also, because of assured perennial supply of water.

The system of settlements prevailing at the time, consisted of a large number of self supporting villages and few towns which were also the seats of administration. Agriculture was the vocation of the masses. The artisan was more a public servant, employed by the rural community, than a private producer. The society was a closed one where any interaction with the outside was unknown. All exchange, whether agricultural or industrial, was limited to the village community, and the extra - territorial interaction, if any, took place at the level of the village Headman. Rarely did the lowest segment interact beyond the boundaries of the village except for social purposes of marriage, pilgrimage or other ritual performances. The economic life was constrained and the poverty of the people prevented the growth of exchange and rendered each locality self sufficient. Moreover, due to the lack of rapid and continuous communication even adjacent villages used to be practically cut off from each other. This self sufficient economy was no appropriate nursing centre for any place of an order higher than that of a village. Even the smaller towns were predominantly agricultural, with only a handful of craftsmen who served the peasantry and were in turn supported by them.
The basis of all economic activity being essentially agrarian, most towns in India at this period owed their existence to being either, a centre of pilgrimage, seat of Royalty, the Capital of a Province or a commercial centre along trade routes. From the economic point of view, the dominant trait of the towns was their non-industrial character. Most of the towns had only one kind of industry; the production of goods for the patronage of the court. There was no organized decision making process and all the powers were vested in the royalty that was responsible for defence and administration. All other classes were subordinate, and opportunities for any of the classes to advance beyond his hereditary status were few. Thus, wealth and enterprise gathered round the court and rose and fell with the rise and fall of the empire. The development of markets also followed a familiar pattern. They were often promoted by a local ruler and declined with the fall of the local power.

Though few inland trade centres grew, the port towns flourished. Sopara, Kalyan, Thana and Panvel have, since historic times, played an important part in the foreign commerce of India. Inadequacy of inland transport routes often led to the development of coastal towns on the sea-creeks far inland, so as to command a large area. Creek heads or estuary-heads commanded the best sites for the sailing vessels which did not require a sizeable draught and could easily ply a considerable distance inland, giving rise to small break of bulk towns, which absorbed a greater degree of foreign influence and developed international marts. Some of these towns existed as early as the first century of the Christian era and are
mentioned by most ancient voyagers. Periplus (1911) mentions Barigaza (Broach), Calliena (Kalyan) and Semulla (Chembur).

Water transport was the most effective medium in the early days of the Christian era and a creek head location was both a site for handling the international trade as well as a central place for collection and distribution for the region between the Sahyadri and the coast. Some of these towns have in addition enjoyed the distinction of being Capital cities, for instance, Sopara and Kalyan. Sopara, which is virtually non-existent today was the provincial capital of 'Apparanta' the coastal province of the Mauryan empire. It lies midway between Broach and Ratnapuri. The coastal 'Janapada' in all probability extended as far north as Tapti and a median location to administer the entire territory justifies the choice of Sopara. Sea transport must have been another consideration for its location on a sea creek. In fact, Sopara should have had the same advantages in the first century B.C. as Bombay has today. A location inland could have created problems of effective control, particularly at a time when long distance travel by land was hazardous and international contacts were most effective by sea.

Kalyan was another important port town located on a creekhead. It had the advantage of an inland location that was an asset in the pre-steam navigation days. Later, it became the regional capital of the Chalukyas in the 11th century A.D.

Also, important in the geography of early towns are the cave settlements. Such settlements developed at the time when Buddhism had become the State religion in Northern India, and Buddhist mendicants moved over the entire length and breadth of the country to propagate Buddhism. The cave temples at Karla
Growth of towns along the old transport routes.
and Bhaja in the Indrayani valley were carved close to lonavla which was probably the old settlement "Valuraka".

Many other settlements which rose to prominence because of particular gods and deities or cults at different periods of history, have since declined and remain more villages today. Mulay (1965) while tracing the origin of ancient place names, has observed that every village in the past has had an associated myth attached to its origin. Few villages of religious significance in the past have developed as important centres today. Thus, religion, though an important factor initially, has not been a great sustaining force in the later development of towns.

Inland transport though an important factor in the growth of towns theoretically, usually followed rather than preceded the growth of towns in the pre-medieval period. Initially, many trunk routes were developed mainly for the military campaigns or to facilitate the travel of pilgrims. Later, along these routes, a number of centres grew, which eventually became marts for exchange. Apart from the trunk routes, a number of ancillary roads connected the important sea ports.

The factors discussed above, were operative till the middle of the 12th Century, when the Deccan was invaded by the Muslim rulers of Delhi. The towns developed during the pre-medieval period, changed in their relative importance with the advent of Muslim rule in the area.

B) MEDIEVAL PERIOD
(12th Century A.D. to 17th Century A.D.)

The medieval period, which coincides with the Moghul rule in India, saw the onset of new trends in town development.
Defence and commerce by land were important influences in the origin and development of towns during the medieval period. Though economic organisation continued to be rudimentary, there was need for political and administrative control which in the pre-industrial days was usually dominant over economic relations. A net of regional headquarters for the purpose of administration, defence and revenue collection were spread all over the region. A sizeable number of fort and garrison towns were established in order to defend the conquered territories.

In 1495 the Konkan was divided by Mahaud Begada of Gujarat into first five districts of which Thana was the head. The port towns Agashi, Danda, Sopara, Bassein, Bhivandi, Malyan, Bombay and Panvel yielded sizeable revenues.

Towards the end of the 14th century, the Deccan was severely hit by a drought. This led to a complete paralysis of economic life. Many Deshashta Brahmin families shifted westward and colonised the rainy, mountainous and less fertile region which they named 'Mawal' (i.e. sundown).

During Shivaji's regime, because of political disturbances and widespread economic instability, no new towns grew; even those established formerly, declined. Poona, however replaced Satara as the seat of administration during the Mahratha rule. It became the headquarters from where the Peshwas launched their campaigns in all directions, hence it became a focus of routes diverging in different directions. The 'Peshwas', the hereditary Prime Ministers and the virtual rulers of the Maharatha empire invited artisans and craftsmen from far off
cities to settle in Poona. But the growth of Poona was at the expense of the empire which was never properly governed. Maratha occupation of the land hardly meant any prosperity, it was on the contrary a curse on the poor peasantry.

The struggle for power between the Siddhis, the Marathas and the Portuguese to control the port town of the Konkan hampered trade and they stagnated.

Hence the regional economy, immediately preceding the British was essentially of a subsistence type attuned entirely to the vicissitudes of nature. The region had only a rudimentary system of incipient community market centres, serving a dispersed rural population. Except for Poona, there were not many towns in the area and the few that did exist were rather unimportant.

C) BRITISH PERIOD
(Seventeenth Century A.D. to the mid-Twentieth Century A.D.)

With the arrival of the British, greater security was ensured. They developed the harbour of Bombay and made it their headquarters in Western India, instead of Surat as Maratha raids had upset the commercial life of Gujarat. In the late 17th century every attempt was made by the East India Company not only to let inhabitants remain on the island but also to attract people from outside. Liberty to trade was granted as a particular privilege to those inhabiting the island of Bombay, not only in the island but along the entire West coast. The result was a growing immigration from Surat and Diu of merchants and other refugees from the Portuguese cities on the mainland. Upto the middle of the 18th century the policy of the Company was to temporize with the native powers in Western India and in the
comparative tranquility, they gradually strengthened their political and commercial position.

The annexation of the Deccan which followed the Battle of Kirkee (1802) and the dethronement of the Peshwa was one of the events which contributed to the making of the modern city of Bombay. Free and uninterrupted trade between the ports and the mainland which had suffered in the past from the jealous restrictions of the Maratha government, was thereby assured.

It must be stressed that the region in which Bombay is located is not well developed as a whole and very much leans on Bombay for its support. Subsistence farming characterised by rice cultivation, fishing and forestry are the chief features of the economy of the region. The city has grown, on the contrary, out of the opportunity provided by the historical and economic necessities of the people alien to the region and even to the mainland. Its rapid growth to 'Urbs primus' in India triggered the development of its immediate hinterland.

**Impact of Transport Routes**

A major contribution to the economic development of the region was the construction of an efficient transport network by the British. Though the construction of the roads and railways and the establishment of the Post and Telegraph systems, were primarily meant to serve the economic, political and military interests of the British, the communication lines tended to diminish village isolation and were the chief cause of the general economic transition that took place during this period. Improved accessibility made it clear to the peasants that factors
other than local needs were beginning to govern the types of crops they grow. The growth and subsequent prosperity of the village apart from their agricultural productivity, was linked more to their being situated close to the markets. This in turn can be accurately measured in terms of the comparative facility they enjoyed for transportation of produce to the market centres.

Commercialization of agriculture followed and this trend brought the village out of its isolation, into a more unified economic stream. Thus large quantities of garden produce were grown in Bassein and Panvel and their surrounding villages for the expanding and remunerative market of Bombay. The villages situated along the Bombay-Poona road or a short distance from it derived a considerable advantage from the sale of grass for the numerous droves of carts and pack bullocks that daily halted at the different stages on the road. Grass became the main crop (besides rice) in the tehsils which traversed the road replacing the hill crops like Nagi, Vani etc. This made the mal\(^1\) lands more valuable and this can be gauged by the fact that the a number of villages adjoining the ghats were brought into the third class in place of the fourth class rates for the assessment of tariffs (Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Poona, 1885).

Again, the villages situated on the Bombay-Poona road contrasted favourably with those at a distance from it as the Ryots had easy access to the best possible market. A regular set of dealers visited the villages to buy the surplus rice for the city factories, paying ready cash. The rising towns were those which had adapted the modern improvements in communications

\(^1\) Mal are those given over to pasture
to make them centres of collection and distribution. Thus Talegaon Dabhade became the largest market centre of Poona District due to its important position on the Bombay-Poona railway. Large quantities of traffic which used to go down the rough tracks of the Sahyadris from Junnar and Med found its way from Nasik high road to Talegaon railway station.

Kalyan too, received an impetus after the opening of the railway. The Agra road used to be a source of great prosperity to Bhivandi before the completion of the railway diverted the trade to Kalyan. The traffic passing through decreased considerably, and the opening of the railway thus deprived Bhivandi of much of its old trade importance.

Therefore, with the development of transport, the market economy received a tremendous boost and the population congregated at points conducive to economic growth. With the influence of transport lines becoming perceptible, the growth poles at this time were undisputably linear. Old centres declined and new ones emerged as a result of the competition and differential rates of growth or decline within the existing set of settlements, depending on their location, with reference to the main streams of communication. The dawn of the 20th century brought on the scene many centres which were generally the outcome of some commercial activity. They possessed some modicum of centrality in the local economy as provided by the roads or railways, or in the political system as provided by the District and Tehsil headquarters.
The development of the major arterial routes linking Bombay with the rest of India to a large extent contributed to the growth of Bombay as the leading centre of trade, commerce and industry in India. With the construction of the railways it was possible to channel raw cotton from its major growing areas, particularly from Nagpur, to foreign markets through Bombay. The railways also opened up the northern trade routes to Gujarat, Punjab and the heart land of India in the Gangetic plain. Prior to this, communications to the North had always been poor and the sea route was often inoperative during the rainy season.

The availability of suburban trains in the Bombay region also contributed to the sprawl of the city and the growth of dormitory suburbs. A sizeable number of people commuted from Kalyan and Thana to the metropolis, resulting in the growth of these towns. Poona, the summer capital of the British, though apparently isolated, was also well linked to Bombay, both by road and railway. The most prestigious train in the region, the 'Deccan Queen', has been running between the two towns since 1930, bringing in white collared workers from Poona in time for office in the morning and returning in the evening. Even today, this train offers special facilities for season ticket holders.

**Growth of Trade**

Trade was the basis for the growth of Bombay from a small fortified settlement to a city of great significance. External factors were therefore an important influence on Bombay’s economy during this period. For example, the American Civil War interrupted the export of raw cotton to Lancashire,
and for a short period the inferior cotton output of Western India received a great boost. Between 1861-62 and 1864-5, cotton exports increased by 171 percent in physical terms and 480 percent in value (Harris, N., 1978). Later the conclusion of the war in 1865 resulted in almost total bankruptcy and unemployment.

Though, external factors played a crucial role in Bombay's economy, they were not the sole determinants. The domestic harvest from time to time proved critical in cutting supplies. During the famine of 1899-1900, Bombay's cotton exports were said to have been cut by about 50 percent and wheat by 70 percent. Raw cotton and opium, dominated exports up to the middle of the nineteenth century. The former remained important making up nearly a fifth of the export value in 1881.

Imports comprised essentially of British cotton piece goods which accounted for almost one third of the total imports in the 1850's, though this volume slowly decreased with the development of Indian manufacture. Sugar (nearly 10 percent of the import value in 1850-55) and silk (9 percent, 1840-41) were also important components of imports. Metals gradually expanded to reach nearly a third of the import value in the 1860's. There was also a trend for Bombay's transformation from a strong exporting into a primarily importing centre of goods required for the development of the tiny modern sector. The change illustrate the integration of the city into the wider Indian economy.

Early Industrial Development

Much of the development which has occurred in the twentieth century is related to the growth of industries in the region. Even when trade was the main factor generating Bombay's income,
there were elements of manufacturing in the city. Bombay's industrialization followed an import substitution pattern, still a powerful motive in determining the nature of industries in the region. This was a prime factor in the development of cotton manufacturing. By 1920, about 11 percent of the population of the city were employed in the cotton industries.

Development of Hydroelectric Power

A major factor which has contributed towards the tremendous growth of industries in the Bombay-Poona region was the development of hydro-electricity by the Tata Hydro Electric Power Supply Co. Ltd. in 1910. Since the region was situated far from the coal reserves, power was a major factor which hampered the growth of industrialization during the initial stage. In the absence of cheap and adequate power in the area, it is doubtful if the massive scale of industrialisation which has taken place in the region would have been possible.

D) RECENT DEVELOPMENT (Post Independence Period).

The recent development in the region is associated with the growth of Bombay. The city was the nucleus of commercial and industrial activities in the region. Growth was concentrated in the metropolis and its suburbs. The other centres were predominantly market towns whose possibilities of growth were limited by the extent of agricultural hinterland they controlled and the volume of trade transacted. They remained medium sized towns. Poona was primarily an educational and administrative centre.
Industrial diversification of Bombay

The declining dependence on trade had increased the stability of Bombay's economy. However, the lack of industrial diversification still rendered the city vulnerable. In 1931, there was an 18 percent male and 48 percent female decline in industrial employment in comparison with 1921 (Census of India, Cities of the Bombay Presidency, 1931). The textile industry has been in constant decline since its peak in the early 1920's. Concomitantly the increase of engineering and chemicals in the city's manufacturing has been substantial.

Congestion in Bombay

The rapid commercial and industrial growth of Bombay has resulted in a disproportionate share of the most important economic activities being concentrated in this city. The average per capita income in Greater Bombay is almost four times the average for Maharashtra, resulting in an influx of migrants into the city. The city has grown at a fast pace, from 812,912 persons in 1901 to 8,202,759 persons in 1981. This rapid growth which has not been accompanied by reorganisation, regulation and planning has generated a host of problems. There has been a breakdown in most civic and social amenities such as an acute shortage of housing, power, water and telephones. In order to reduce the disparity between Bombay and the rest of the State as well as to control the population of the city, the policy of dispersal of industries away from Bombay has been adopted by the planning authorities. In the same context, the development of the Twin City of Bombay or New Bombay was planned.
Dispersal of Industries from Bombay

After 1961, the Municipal Corporation of Bombay took very effective steps to stop any further location of large manufacturing or processing units inside the city. Furthermore, the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation was established to facilitate the dispersal of industries by establishing a number of industrial estates outside Greater Bombay. The implanting of industries in other towns, has helped to bridge the gap between Bombay and the other urban centres in the region. The growth of Thana, for example, was revitalised with the wave of industrialisation during the sixties. Industries also provided the nucleus for the growth of a number of new centres, for example Khopoli, Mohone, Katemanivali etc. Poona too, has grown considerably since 1961 due to growth of industries in and around its vicinity, particularly in the Pimpri-Chinchwad zone. The development of this township has been of such phenomenal proportions that a separate municipality has been established for Pimpri-Chinchwad. With the growth of these centres, the earlier primate pattern is giving way to a hierarchical pattern of cities in the region.

New Bombay

Though the proposal for the Twin City of Bombay was envisaged as early as 1956, this project has not been as successful as the dispersal of industries. The city has not achieved the target of 2 millions planned for 1981. The industrial, commercial and administrative functions of the town have not gained enough momentum to generate cumulative growth. In addition, the development of a new port at Nhava Sheva, which was assumed to be an important input for New
Bombay, has not yet been started. However, the city has shown an increased momentum of growth since the last five years and should contribute positively towards decentralization from Bombay in the future.

In the Bombay-Poona axial region today, industry is the dominant factor of urbanisation and is considered a synonym for prosperity. It has accentuated the process of rural-urban migration and has resulted in the creation of new and the enlargement of existing urban areas.
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