CHAPTER
II

TOPOGRAPHY OF THE REGION
Topography of Marathwada region

The state of Maharashtra forms a major part of peninsular India with the sea coast on the western side. Marathwada region of this state, with an area of 64,798 sq. km. falls within North latitude 17° 30' and 20° 40' and East longitude 74° 40' and 78° 15'. It comprises of five districts – Aurangabad, Bhir, Parbhani, Nanded and Osmanabad (please refer the map). The region is also known as Aurangabad division for official and administrative purposes. Aurangabad is the most underdeveloped and also the smallest division in respect of both area and population as compared to other divisions of the state (Bombay, Poona and Nagpur).

Rivers and hills

All the districts lie on the Deccan table land with a slope towards the southeast. The rivers Gedavari, Penaganga and Purna with a number of their tributaries form the major drainage system. The main rivers in conformity with the general topography flow towards the southeast.

Ajantha range of hills pass through the northern parts of Nanded, Parbhani and Aurangabad districts. Balaghat hills in Bhir district extend towards the north and enter into the southern part of Parbhani district. The altitude varies from 300 metres to 1000 metres above the mean sea level. The plateau has an average altitude of about 667 metres above the mean sea level.
Soils

A major part of Marathwada has deep black soils resulting from the disintegration and decomposition of trap rock. Variations occur according to the sites, underground rocks, altitude and the degree of erosion. They vary in texture, fertility and depth. A mixture of laterite and black soils is found in Nanded district. Coarse sandy to sandy-loamy soils which are formed from the disintegration and decomposition of granite complex are found in Nanded district.

Hill slopes are covered by coarse, gravelly and sandy soils.

Climate

Marathwada has the typical tropical hot and dry climate. Of the three seasons, summer is very warm and maximum temperature can rise to as much as 46° during May at Nanded. Winter (October to February) is pleasant with temperature falling as low as 2.2°C in Bhir district. Monsoon normally starts in June and lasts till October. During this period, Nanded district receives the maximum rainfall while Bhir district the least.

Agriculture and forests

According to 1969 - 1970 Government statistics the total cultivated area was 5,675,000 ha. The net area under irrigation was 2,27,000 ha. 2,64,200 ha were permanent
pastures. The forest area in this region in relation to the total geographical area is only 4.07%. The forests fall mainly under the following categories:

a) Dry teak forests
b) Dry mixed deciduous forests
c) Dry grass lands
d) Anjan forests

Of these, the category (b) predominates and, at places, it often degenerates into a scrub jungle.

The district of Aurangabad

The district of Aurangabad extends over an area of 16,718 sq.km. and is situated in the upper Godavari basin to the extreme northwest of Marathwada. In general the district slopes down towards the south and southeast. The district lies between the latitudes of 19° 17' 30" and 20° 40' 10" North and between the longitudes 74° 40' and 76° 40' East. The general elevation above the sea level varies between 665 and 735 metres on the north and between 565 and 635 metres towards the south.

Soils

Soils of Aurangabad district are medium to deep black and contain large quantities of calcium and magnesium carbonates. These are deficient in nitrogen and phosphorus and crack heavily in summer. The soils are quite fertile and are particularly suitable for cultivation of wheat,
cotton, virginia tobacco, chillies and jowar.

Climate

The climate of Aurangabad is pleasant and agreeable during the greater part of the year. The climatic year may be divided into 3 short seasons:

a) moderately warm, wet season from June to September
b) a cool dry season from October to February
c) a hot dry season from March to May.

During the rainy season the temperature does not fall below 17° and normally ranges between 21° to 36°. The winter season is comparatively dry. January is the coldest month of the year. The mean maximum temperature in the month of May rises to even as high as 41°. In summer, the days are hot though the nights are fairly cool.

The University Botanic Garden

The Marathwada University Campus is located on the northwestern fringe of the city. The botanic garden with an area of 10 hectares occupies the central portion of the campus. It is being developed as an experimental wing of the Department since 1965. The garden is surrounded by a nullah almost on three sides. The garden is provided with adequate lift irrigation facilities.