INTRODUCTION
Land resource use is central to all discussions of land problems and policies and plays an important role in the economy of a country. Its significance is further increased in view of the rising pressure of population on land, as there is need for more food, clothing and shelter. Land is the main resource which provides these requirements but it is a limited resource. A rational assessment of land and its scientific utilization has become important, and it is possible only if the whole complex of landuse is studied at the district, taluka or even village level by taking into account the local physical and socio-economic conditions.

Choice of the region and topic:

The choice of area and topic under investigation are influenced by many considerations. Firstly, this region occupying southern part of Maharashtra plateau is regarded as one of the most fertile and well watered agricultural areas of the State (Dikshit, 1971). Secondly, it has a transitional location, the Konkan characteristics are seen in western part and the Desh characteristics in the eastern part. Thirdly, the economy of the region is essentially oriented to the Krishna river and it has made developments in agro-industrial production.
With the growth of sugar factories during the last decade a large area which was previously under foodgrains is being devoted to sugarcane, thereby leading to changes in the use of agricultural land. Hence, the study of the use of land for crop and the changes in the areal strength of the same offers a scope for obtaining a more complete understanding of the agricultural landuse of this district.

All these considerations have motivated the author to turn his attention to this district and its agricultural landuse.

Objectives of the present study:

The study is primarily concerned with the changing agricultural landuse pattern in south Maharashtra's Kolhapur district. This landuse study requires a set of maps in order to understand and analyse it. But agricultural landuse survey is not merely the mapping of what was grown on land but it is the study of the analysis of the factors which bring out the landuse pattern. The specific objectives of the present study are: (i) To categorize the general landuse and cropping pattern through the maps and to analyse the same in the light of environmental and socio-economic conditions, (ii) to map, describe and analyse the changes in agricultural landuse which have taken place.
since 1951 (first five year plan period), and (iii) finally to compute the proportion of land involved in change. In addition an attempt is made to examine the technical factors leading to agricultural landuse changes.

**Hypotheses:**

Relief, climate and soil set broad limit to the use of land but landuse change involves a combination of physical, socio-economic and technological and other factors. All or any of these may have played a major role in making the changes in agricultural landuse. Landuse change is a process of "linked stages" in which the introduction of the first factor prepares the necessary ground for the next. However, it may be possible to assess the significance of any particular factor which seem to make an extremely important contribution and without which no significant change could possibly occur.

**Previous work done:**

Geographical investigations of the agricultural phenomena pertaining to this region are relatively rare. Mention may however be made of some papers in this regard. Paper by Shinde and Pawar (1976) dealt with agricultural landuse study of Bhatanwadi village in this district. In
addition to this mention could be made of Bhat's (1956) article on landform and cropping pattern of Panchaganga valley. But a detailed work based on taluka and village level data depicting the agricultural landuse pattern and changes in this district by geographers has not been previously done. Present study is an attempt in that direction.

Among the non-geographic work mention must be made of the pioneering work by late Prof. P.C.Patil an agricultural economist. He dealt with the agro-economic aspects of this region in his book entitled 'Regional survey of economic resources, India, Kolhapur, 1950'.

Methodology and Sources of Data:

The changing pattern of agricultural landuse is proposed to be studied at two levels namely, taluka and villages selected from the different environmental settings. The statistical information is sought for both villages and talukas through several methods of data collection and observation. Each taluka headquarter is visited by the author to collect the data according to a schedule which indicate patterns, changes and trends in the landuse and cropping pattern of the region under study. This was possible only with the co-operation of revenue and other
officials, Government of Maharashtra. Farm studies of some selected villages were also conducted with the co-operation of local farmers.

The grouping of items is done on the basis of the proportion of the area occupied by the crops, and the crops which cover a very minor proportion of cropped land are grouped under the heading of miscellaneous crops. To eliminate the effects of weather and to attain a more reliable picture of the changes, quinquennial averages are used such as 1951-55 and 1971-75 (corresponding to two Five Year Plans).

Analyses have been undertaken with both absolute numbers and percentage values. Crop ranking and combination techniques were applied to delineate the landuse regions. The levels of agricultural development has been assessed through indices of change. For determining the changes in landuse and cropping pattern, mainly the index method (Weaver, 1954) has been adopted.

Field studies, data collection therefrom and observations made during the field work form the basis of the present analyses. Information collected through interviews has also helped to synthesize the statistical analysis. The essential data so obtained are presented in the tables, graphs, diagrams and maps. These in themselves will provide
adequate explanations. Most of the maps are chloropeth in which areal differences in the importance of particular elements are shown by the differences in the density of shading. The choice of class interval is as per range of percentage values.

The study of all villages (1089) in the region would have been very difficult and time consuming. Therefore, to make a more intensive study of landuse change, villages (the smallest unit for which data are available) were selected by the random sample method. This made the sample approximately 22 percent of the total.

Sources of Data:

It is not possible to investigate the spatial pattern of landuse (and changes therein) before 1950-51. Because many changes in the administrative boundaries of the region took place, as it was a princely state before 1950-51. Hence, an attempt is made to examine the changes that have occurred during the last 25 years (1950-51 to 1974-75) for which uniform data at taluka level are available.

Detailed statistical information on agriculture, population, rainfall and livestock is available at the taluka and district headquarters and are easily accessible. The main body of the data used in this study is collected from two sources viz. primary and secondary.
(i) Primary Source:

The statistics are collected personally from different sources. The landuse, crop hectarage and landholding size is collected for the villages from the official documents of village Talathi and Mauledar offices. Information collected through interviews and personal correspondence on various aspects of landuse, irrigation and holdings have also been added to this body of data.

(ii) Secondary Source:

The secondary sources include the published reports and abstracts such as socio-economic review and district statistical abstracts census hand book and gazetteer of Kolhapur district. They provide a rich background material and also contain vast amount of information about soil, yield and production, crops, seeds, fertilizers etc. These sources of data provide very comprehensive, integrated and mappable information using the village, taluka and district as unit of reference.

Proposed Outline of Work:

The entire study comprising three parts is arranged into eight chapters. The first part of the work is concerned with the major elements of region's environmental and socio-
economic setting. The first chapter of this section begins with the location and analysis of relief, climate, soil and water resources. The next chapter is devoted to a discussion of socio-economic factors as bases of farming in the region. It includes the analysis of population growth, density, pleasure, farm workers, landownership and tenure, landholding size, irrigation and agricultural implements.

Significant aspects of present study have been delineated in the second section of the work. General landuse and cropping pattern of the region are discussed in chapter three and four. In each case, temporal variations that have occurred during the last two decades are briefly outlined. This is followed by a sample study of villages wherein the contemporary landuse and cropping pattern of eight villages is discussed and an attempt is also made to measure the amount of change in landuse pattern of two hundred thirty six villages in the region.

The third section includes an analysis of vital aspects concerning regionalisation of cropping pattern change and technological developments. Chapter six of this section is devoted to demarcate the cropping pattern regions by applying ranking, crop combination techniques and diversification. This is followed by chapter seven which attempts to assess the development of agriculture
in the region, crop pattern change regions and crop productivity changes, on the basis of technological factors. The last chapter of the work presents the general conclusions.
REFERENCES: