Introduction
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Geography is concerned with the relationship between Man and his Environment. To a considerable extent this field is interested in the distributive aspect of physical and cultural phenomena.

No study, from a geographical point of view, has been so far made on Maharashtra (in the sense I have taken.) A regional geography of Maharashtra will be too large an undertaking. I have therefore confined my study to the basic relationship between Man and his general physical environment in this area. Particularly his response to the environmental factors, as indicated by the present distribution of population, is the main theme of this study.

In considering the distribution of population, taluka\(^1\) has been taken as the basic unit for the study as a whole. But in sample surveys, which have been carried out in more detail, a village has been considered as the basic unit of population. Hence the study is based on the administrative divisions rather than on natural ones. This is mainly because of the fact that relevant data are available according to the former divisions only.

Extent of Maharashtra:

In this study the word 'Maharashtra' includes those

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\(^1\) Each district is sub-divided into talukas for administrative convenience.
twelve districts of the Bombay State where a predominant majority of the population speaks Marathi language. In the remaining districts of the State, Marathi is spoken by a minority.

The reason for restricting the present study only to the existing Bombay-Maharashtra lies in the fact that this region more-or-less forms the 'core' of Greater Maharashtra.

The twelve districts are 1) East Khandesh, 2) West Khandesh, 3) Nasik, 4) Ahmednagar, 5) Sholapur, 6) Kolhapur, 7) South Satara, 8) North Satara, 9) Poona, 10) Thana, 11) Kolaba and 12) Ratnagiri. (Refer Maps no.1 and no.12)

Hence to cater to the cultural and educational needs of this area a separate University, on regional basis, has been instituted at Poona, in 1948. This suggests the recognition, on the part of the Bombay State Government, of this area as a cultural unit.

'Western India' A Regional Geography, by Prof. C. D. Deshpande, page 124.

The States Reorganisation Bill, as passed by the Indian Parliament, envisages a bigger bilingual state of Bombay, which, in addition to its present territory minus the 4 Kannada speaking districts, will include eight Marathi-speaking districts of Vidarbha (from Madhya Pradesh), five of Marathawada (from Hyderabad State), and whole of the Cutch and Saurashtra. Hence for the first time, in recent (continued on next page)
Moreover it is significant to note that in spite of the fact that Marathi speaking areas are distributed in three administrative provinces, only the one lying in the Bombay State has retained the name 'Maharashtra'. Hence it was decided upon to limit the study only to the already recognized Maharashtra.

Maharashtra lies in Western India (Refer Map no.1), and stretches between 15°33' and 22°21' North Latitudes and 72°39' and 76°28' East Longitudes. Thus it lies wholly within the Tropics. It occupies an area of about 55,460 square miles and has, according to the 1951 Census, a population of about 16.5 million, which is about 45 per cent of that of the Bombay State, and about 4.7 per cent of that of the Indian Republic.

On the north Maharashtra is bounded by Gujarat, Madhya Bharat and Madhya Pradesh, on the east by the Hyderabad State, on the south by Goa (Portuguese), and Karnatak, and on the west by the Arabian Sea.

Plan of the Work:

The study is conveniently divided into the following three sections:

1. Physical Factors - this includes the consideration of physical features, drainage, geology, -

5 (Contd) history, all contiguous marathi speaking population of India is brought under one administration

6 Maha + Rashtra = Great Nation
minerals, climate, soils, etc.

2. Actual Distribution of Population - the work is based on the figures of the 1951 Census; later data, in such detail, are not available. The distribution of population is studied under the following heads:

   a) Based on the Natural Regions
   b) Based on the Administrative Units.

The second part is studied in more detail based on the social characteristics of the population such as rural and urban groups, language groups, age groups, faiths followed, literacy, etc. This is considered only districtwise as similar talukwise data are not available.

3. Examination of the extent of human responses to the physical factors as indicated by the distribution of population - For this part personal visits to almost all districts have been undertaken. Nevertheless, as a basis for the whole structure of the third part, four sample surveys (Appendix III) have been carried out in detail, viz. a) The Panjhra basin in the north. b) The Mula basin in the centre. c) The Mutha basin in the centre and d) The Panchganga basin in the south. These natural units are more-or-less evenly distributed over the whole area.

A large part of Maharashtra is covered by basalt varying in thickness from 10,000 feet to a few hundred feet. There is
thus a geological monotony and the region lacks a variety of economic minerals, save for few minor exceptions, of bauxite in the districts of Thana, Ratnagiri and Kolhapur, and iron ore in Ratnagiri, which are yet to be exploited. As a consequence industrial development has had to be restricted to such industries as the cotton textiles and sugar, these being based on raw materials (cotton and sugarcane) locally available rather than on power minerals.

Hence agriculture remains the main source of maintenance for the population. Agriculture primarily depends upon such physical factors as nature of the terrain, soil cover, rainfall etc. Naturally then these physical factors largely guide the pattern of population distribution in Maharashtra. It can be said that surface configuration and precipitation are the major influences.

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7 This observation supports the statements of

i) D. Stamp in his book 'Asia' pp. 50,233

ii) G.B.Cressey " " 'Asia's Lands & Peoples' p.417.

iii) A. Geddes " Paper Published in 'Geographical Review' of October 1942.

iv) O.H.K.Spate " book 'India' p.106

v) C.D.Deshpande " book 'Western India' p.127.

vi) Kingsley Davis " 'The Population of India & Pakistan' p. 18