CHAPTER Four

PROFILE OF KOLHAPUR CITY :
THE STUDY AREA
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4.1 HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE

The historicity of Kolhapur has been reliably traced back to antiquity. In fact, the town is so old that its origin is attributed to the Creator Brahma Himself in the mythology, after ‘Brahmpuri’, the old nucleus of the steelement that had prospered on the high bank of the river Panchaganga. In Puranas, it is also known as ‘Karaveera’, after the legend that the Goddess Mahalaxmi used her mace (Kar) to lift and save her favourite retreat from the waters of the Great Deluge. The folklore has it that the names ‘Kolhapur’ and ‘Karveer’ have been derived after two demons, Kolhasura and Karaveera, that were slain by the Goddess Mahalaxmi. Yet another analogy is that the name ‘Kolhapur’ has been taken from the city’s one time king, the Srigala (Sanskrit for ‘fox’, converted to ‘Kolha’ in Prakrit). According to Rajawade, ‘Kolla’ was the Goddess of the ‘Kols’ or ‘Kolas’, the aboriginal residents of the settlement and her shrine was named as ‘Kollapur’, the name eventually degenerated into its Marathi form ‘Kolhapur’. Other explanations based on the topography of the region too are offered.

In any case, the rulership history of Kolhapur through its recorded past is much chequered. From 1st century B.C. onwards, it had been successively ruled by the Satwahanas (upto 218 A.D.), Rashtrakutas (218-500 A.D.), again Rashtrakutas (750-975 A.D.) as also Kalyani Chalukyas and Shilaharas (upto 1210 A.D). Finally, the Devgiri Yadavas ruled over Kolhapur from 1210 to 1306 A.D., when they were vanquished by Malik Gafur. Subsequently, the rulership changed hands between different Jagirdarsof Adilshahi and Bahamanshahi. All these dynasties have left the evidences of their conquest of Kolhapur in the stone-inscriptions strewn all over the area.

In 1659, Shivaji, the Great, wrestled the control of Panhala Fort (20 km away) and of Kolhapur along with it, from Bijapur Sultan and successfully defended its recapture by the Sultan and the English. The period of 100 or so years after Shivaji’s demise is replete with Marathas’ fratricidal wards to retain the control of the Maratha kingdom. After much palace intrigue and repeated realignments of mighty Sardars, Sambhaji, the grandson of Shivaji, who was utterly discomfited by his cousin, Shahu, in 1731, “accepted the principality of Kolhapur as a district and an independent sovereignty, comprehending with certain restrictions, the tract of country between the Warana and the Krishna rivers on the north and the east and the Tungabhadra on the south, containing about 40,000 square miles and yielding a revenue of Rupees 28,00,000”. The internecine Maratha strife and bloodshed around Kolhapur could get over only in 1843, when the British appointed their Minister to Kolhapur Darbar. It was in 1782 that Queen Taabai shifted the Maratha capital from Panhala Fort to Kolhapur. The garrison transit town thus
changed into the a seat of Royalty and started to prosper as a religious, trading and military power centre.

In the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, rebels of 27th Native Infantry Battalion killed at least 15 English officers on 31st July and liberated the town for two weeks from the foreign yoke. The English returned with reinforcements and ruthlessly suppressed the uprising. The rebels and their sympathizers were executed publicly as a deterrent to others. The effects of the trauma lasted for about half a century and held the populace in submission to the might of the white man’s military machine. No significant historical development took place during the later period and the town continued to flourish under successive Rulers. The Princely State of Kolhapur merged into the Union of India on 31st March, 1949, and became a district in the Bombay State.

4.2 GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

The origin of the word ‘Kolhapur’ is controversial. Another explanation suits the topography of the place, according to which, the words ‘Kolla’ and ‘Kholla’ have been derived from an original Kannada word meaning ‘low ground’. Kholla also means a river valley and, therefore, ‘Kolhapur’ means a town situated in the valley of a river; while the word ‘Koll’ means a ‘low lying trough between mountain ranges’, a town situated in such a place being named as ‘Kollapur’, later transformed into Marathi form ‘Kolhapur’.

Therefore, at least topographically, the name Kolhapur has been justified as the town really does lie in a sort of bown formed by the end portions of five valleys of the rivers the Kasari, the Jambhali, the Tulshi, and the Bhogawati, all flowing into the Panchaganga river before it reaches the outskirts of Kolhapur town. Kolhapur is situated at 16°42’ North latitude and 74°16’ East longitude, at a mean sea level of 1872 ft.

The city of Kolhapur has really grown out of a clump of original seven small villages - Brahmapuri, Uttareshwar (Lagmapur), Khol-Khandoba (Kesapur), Rankala, Padmala, Ravaneshwar and laximiwadi - that were settled nearly 2000 years ago. The first three of these were situated on the southern bank of the river Panchaganga while the rest four were near the then numerous lakes in the area. Brahmapuri was the oldest among these and had trade and cultural ties with the Roman Empire when it was at its zenith. Sometime later, during the reign of King Yadnya Shatkarni of Satavahana Dynasty (circa 106-113 A.D.), Brahmapuri village was gutted in a blaze and despite attempts to resettle it, it could never regain its lost glory. Other villages were razed to the ground in an earthquake that rocked the area early on in the 9th century. The survivors regrouped in a single settlement in the vicinity of today’s Mahalaxmi temple. That very settlement, 1200 years later, has changed into a vibrant, bustling, growing city spread over 66.82 sq.km., a home for 6 lakh plus people.

Kolhapur City is the headquarters of Kolhapur district, comprising 1,086 villages divided into 12 revenue talukas. The district sprawls across the Deccan Plateau in the rainshadow region of the Sahyadrian mountain ranges on the southern-most tip of the State of Maharashtra. It is bounded on the north by the district of Sangli and on the west by the districts of Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri of Maharashtra State and on the east and south by the district of Belgaum of Karnataka State.
Map 4.1
Shiroli MIDC Industrial Estate
Map 4.2
Gokul Shirgaon MIDC Industrial Estate
Topographically, the district consists of plains, plateaus and hill ranges as well as is crisscrossed by the valleys of the Krishna, the Warana, the Panchaganga, the Dudhganga, the Vedganga and the Hiranyakeshi rivers, all flowing due southeast. The flood-plains and the flood-terrains of these rivers have endowed the district with prized soil fertility.

Climatically, the city enjoys salubrious weather throughout the year, maximum being 40°C in the summer month of May and the minimum being 15°C in the winter month of December; thus, there are neither hot summers nor harsh winters. The rainfall in the district varies from 6200 mm in the West to 525 mm in the East; Kolhapur City, on an average, getting about 1000 mm annually.

Kolhapur’s reputation as a transit town dates back to medieval times, as it occupies such a unique location, that on the west, it is a gateway to the Konkan and the arabian sea; on the east, it openson the rolling flatlands of the Sahyadrian flatlands that once was Maharashtra’s Jowar Bowl and a Goatherd Country; and on the north-south artery, it has long since been the wayfarer’s rectivalizing and resting place between Pune on the north and Bangalore on the south. Today, the city is connected by a well-serviced network of roads (National Highway No.4 - Pune-Bangalore; State Highway No.17 - Ratnagiri - Solapur, and feeder roads from interior Konkan); rail (Kolhapur-Miraj and thence, to Pune and Bangalore) and air (Kolhapur-Mumbai feeder) with other commercial and industrial centres in the country. It also figures prominently on the telecommunication network and powergrid maps of the region.

4.3 Social and Cultural Progression

In about 634 A.D., King Karnadeo of Chalukya Dynasty had begun the construction of a temple for an indeterminate deity, but he could not complete it during his lifetime. Later on, Chalukyas too lost Kolhapur to invaders. Nearly four centuries later, Shilaharas and Calukyas came together through a matrimonial alliance and King Gandharadivya of Shilahara Dynasty finally finished the construction of the abandoned temple and dedicated it to the Goddess Mahalaxmi in about 9th century A.D.20

Jains had arrived in Kolhapur in the 5th century A.D. and later on, Shilaharas also adopted Jainism. Mahant Vidyashankar Bharati established on Panchaganga’s banks at Kolhapur a Matha of Shringeri Peetha in the 13th century.21 These religious institutions, a temple and a Matha, gave Kolhapur the distinction of being the ‘Dakshin Kashi’ (Banaras of South).

In more recent history, under the collective influences of a relatiely stable political clime for over 100 years (1840 A.D. onwards), a general feeling not being directly under the foreigners’ rule, but being the subjects of the lineal descendants of Chh.Shivaji and the Royalty that freely mixed with its subjects, people of Kolhapur developed a political complacency that continued well into the 20th century. Instead, they focused on their cultural and economic progress under the paternalistic State administration. The first major initiative in this direction came with the setting up of a city municipality in 1854, on the second municipality (after Satara) in the Southern States.22 In 1873, the municipality introduced property taxes for the first time. Between 1873 and 1889, the city witnessed the ascent of several social institutions - New Palace, Rajaram High School,
City Library, Town Hall and Albert Edward General Hospital, all came up during this period.\textsuperscript{23}

By the close of the 19th century, the Britishers had established their firm control over the State’s administration, but it was the native upper castes that actually populated the corridors of power. While the British were preoccupied with law and order and diplomatic overtures, Darbaris and petty bureaucrats were anxious to maintain their caste distinction and to retain their stranglehold on the rustic populace. Ignorance and purposefully cultivated superstition of the people effectively prevented their social awakening, which was further hindered by the limited spread of education only among the upper echelons of the social strata.\textsuperscript{24}

Chh.Shahu (1874-1922), prior to his ascension to the throne of Kolhapur in 1894, during his ruler-designate period, had toured the length and breadth of his future domain on horseback and had firsthand witnessed his people’s economic and social wretchedness, the squalour and misery they lived in, and their slavery to the ritualism imposed by the clergy. On his ascension, he took on the monumental task of total social reconstruction, and surprisingly for his detractors, succeeded in it. As a panacea for several social malaises, he first concentrated his attention on spreading the basic education among masses and to accelerate its tempo, he implemented the innovative idea of setting up caste-wise students’ boardings, so as to develop community leadership. The experiment then was quite novel in the country. Soon he made primary education compulsory, though it was a drain on the State’s treasury. He was so earnest in his desire that in 1917, he declared, “If only my people would fortify themselves with even primary education, I shall entrust Kolhapur State’s rule to them”. Next, he set up vocation-related training institutes in agriculture, animal husbandry and technical training.\textsuperscript{25}

He could visualize that the higher educational levels emerging among the lower castes due to his educational reform initiatives have to be gainfully employed. Accordingly, Chh.Shahu issued a notification on 26th July, 1902, reserving 50 per cent of the State jobs for the educated persons from the lower castes, so as to give them an equal opportunity.

Chh.Shahu espoused cooperative movement and encouraged the investment of collected funds into profitable ventures. For developing agriculture, he set up commodity markets, made available newer farm implements, fertilizers and seeds, and for promoting scientific animal husbandry, the State administration arranged livestock exhibitions, produced crossbred animals and set up a large veterinary hospital.

Chh.Shahu gave tremendous boost to the town’s industrialization by first setting up a cotton spinning mill (in joint sector) and later on, patronizing several industrial and commercial enterprises. He had advised, “It is well known that the prosperity of a nation depends on the progress of its industries ... We are Indiana and it is our duty to develop our country. In the days gone-by, artisans prospered through Royal patronage, but now public patronage would be more beneficial. Likewise, the days of a single artisan doing the whole task are over. Now, many people would need to pool their expertise, talent, money and labour; in other words, cooperate with each other. I advise you to start not
only cooperative credit societies, but also cooperative factories and cooperative stores”. 26

The intensity of his feelings gradually percolated down to the lower stratas of the society and the people enthusiastically responded to him. After Chh.Shahu’s untimely death in 1922, his son Chh.Rajaram followed in his father’s footsteps and gave added momentum to his father’s reform initiative. Eventually, the efforts fructified in the blooming up of a whole new genere of socially-conscious leaders.

4.4 Socio-economic Progression

Over the years, Kolhapur has evolved into an educational centre of repute in South Maharashtra. The extensive development of educational network springs from Chh.Shahu’s initiative for educating the masses, irrespective of their religion or caste.

Kolhapur had been a transit town of repute for centuries; as a result, trading and commercial occupations proliferated and prospered. The real fillip to the city’s commerce, however, was received during Chh.Shahu’s reign with the setting up of a jaggery (Gur) market at Kolhapur in 1905, when out-of-State traders were invited to come and settle in the city on the promise of freehold land, tax exemptions and preferential treatment. Gradually, the commerce and because of the availability of soft finance through the growing cooperative movement, commerce’s attendant activity, the banking, prospered. Cooperative credit institutions have effectively liberated common people from the clutches of the moneylenders.

The spirit of cooperation and mutual assistance among the people eventually gave impetus to the growth of the sugar industry and the now the district’s rural landscape has become dotted with 22 sugar factories. Perennial availability of river water and efficiently harnessed irrigation potential have made agriculture the dominant activity in the district; and in its wake, several agro-industrial activities have grown, eng. agro-produce processing, milk and food processing. The city being the district headquarters has turned into a large trading and financial centre; it has the second largest regulated market for agriculture produce in the State. The is also famous for producing ‘Kolhapuri Chappals’, a popular beach wear in Europe and America.

During Chh.Shahu’s reign, Kolhapur had the best developed wrestling arena (Khasbaug Ground) this side of Vindhya, together with numerous wrestlers’ gymkhanas (Talim Mandals) that produced many renowned wrestlers. The tradition continues till date. The city has a long tradition of creativity in literature, fine art, stage and cine production.

4.5 Demographic Features

According to 2001-Census, the population of Kolhapur City stands at 4,93,167, out of which the male population comprises 52% and the female population 48%. The average literacy stands at 80%.
4.6 Industrial Landscape

As far back as 1854, the tentative industrial activity being carried out in the State had prompted Major Graham, a British Officer attached to Kolhapur Darbar, to carry out a survey, that records the number of people engaged in lime-, charcoal-, paper-, glassbangle-making, bamboowork, ink-making, oilmen, saddlers, perfumers, cloth weavers, coppersmiths, liquor distillers, etc., divided into 20 different trades in which were engaged about 1200 people. He mentions the population of the town as 43,387. In 1926, Dr. Balkrishna, then Principal of Rajaram College, carried out the *The Commercial Survey of Kolhapur City*, covering the industrial establishment in the town, which revealed the presence of such activities as leather-tanning, edible oil extraction, printing and publishing, automobile repairs, fireworks, electricity generation and distribution, cine-film production and licensed country liquor brewing. Evidently, without about 75 years since Maj. Graham’s survey, manufacture in Kolhapur had left behind the traditional and taken on the contemporary, the number of people engaged in these activities having gone up to 3,778.

The foundation of the modern industry in Kolhapur was laid with the setting up of *Shahu Chhatrapati Spinning and Weaving Mills* on 27.9.1906 as a joint-stock concern of Kolhapur Darbar and private investors. The mill was set up partly to utilize the cotton being grown in about 30,000 acres in the State at that time. The mill was originally only a spinning mill and the weaving department was added in 1928. After several changes in its holding over the years, it was finally closed down in the year 2004.

Since mid-19th century, Kolhapur has had the reputation of producing quality jaggery and exporting it to Kutchha, Kathiawar and Gujarat. Even during the famine year of 1899, Kolhapur State had 9,990 acres of land under sugarcane cultivation. Chh. Shahu realized that jaggery could be harnessed beneficially for developing the economy of the State and established a separate jaggery market adjacent to the railway station. In latter years, the market prospered and now functions on an area admeasuring 145 acres.

Side-by-side with jaggery, canesugar industry also wields a significant influence on the economy of the region. *Kolhapur Sugar Mills* was established under the State’s patronage in 1932 to process the sugarcane left over after the production of jaggery. The mill was equipped to crush about 500 tonnes of cane per day. In 1951-52, jaggery prices crashed to an all time low, forcing the cane farmers to torch their standing sugarcane to clear the lands. Gradually, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of the burnt-down canestalks, rose the canesugar industry in the cooperative sector. Growth of the sugar industry proved a boon to the then infantile engineering industry as it gave impetus to indigenous manufacture of diesel engine pumpsets used for irrigating the canefields. Several workshops came up for carrying repairs to pumpsets and farm equipment and implements.

The first-ever cast-iron foundry in Kolhapur was set up in 1920 by an enterprising individual, Yamanaji Anandrao Ambale, under Chh. Shahu’s patronage for producing bullock-driver canecrushers. The foundry, however, could not survive. In 1941, one S.Y. Kulkarni started yet another cast-iron foundry on the capital of Rupees. Two. He
was another enterprising genius and in the early days of his venture, he used to give working demonstrations of his diesel engine and pumpset to the farmers right in their villages. His zeal and selling talent boosted the sale of his products and also made the farmers realize the potential of irrigation for harvesting bountiful double or even triple crops, but mostly the sugarcane.\textsuperscript{33} Gradually, the increasing use of oil-engines, pumps and crushers in sugar and jaggery industry helped to start many new engineering workshops, in which oil engines, coal-gas plants, centrifugal pumps, storage batteries, hullers and crushers were manufactured.

Latter-day industrial entrepreneurs in Kolhapur modelled themselves on the lines of the enterprise and tenacity displayed by the pioneers like S.Y. Kulkarni, Hemaraj Samani and Mahadeo Shelke in setting up small and medium-sized ventures, initially to meet the increasing demand for farm equipment from the agricultural sector and subsequently diversifying, for better capacity utilization, into engineering and automotive ancillary sectors.

At present, Kolhapur has three specially designed and developed industrial zones (Shivaji Udyamnagar set up in 1947 and extended into nearby Y.P. Powarnagar and now planning further expansion to Mudshingi village nearby), Shirol MIDC Industrial Estate (1971) and Gokul Shirgaon MIDC Industrial Estate (1982 and now planning to expand on additional 2200 hectares between Kolhapur City and Kagal Town on the south). In addition, Kolhapur Municipal Corporation has set up its Panjarpol Industrial Estate, mainly for servicing industries. Besides these major industrial areas, clusters of foundries, machine-shops, assembly shops have long since come up in the areas of Vikramnagar and Uchagaon, while Jawaharnagar area has been earmarked for the leather industry.\textsuperscript{34}

The industrial landscape of Kolhapur today presents a picture of pulsating, thriving industrial development, presaging an industrially bright future for Kolhapur and its people.

\section*{4.7 \textbf{Industrial Estates in and Around Kolhapur City}}

The salient statistics of the three industrial areas in and around Kolhapur City is being presented below.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Sr. No. & Particulars & Shivaji Udyamnagar & Shirol MIDC* & Gokul-Shirgaon MIDC* \\
\hline
1 & Promoter & Kolhapur Udyam Coop.Socy. & MIDC* & MIDC* \\
2 & Year of Establishment & 1947 & 1971 & 1982 \\
3 & Total Area (Hectares) & 14.27 & 269.00 & 233.93 \\
4 & Total Industrial Plots (Nos.) & 129 & 714 & 775 \\
5 & Plots Distributed (Nos.) & 129 & 640 & 567 \\
6 & Functional Units & 129 & 640 & 567 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Salient Statistics of Industrial Estates in and around Kolhapur City}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{*}Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (an undertaking of the Government of Maharashtra)

\textit{Source: http://www.kolhapurdistrict.org}
References

2. ‘Karveer Mahatmya’ (circa 1730 A.D.), Adhyaya 9, Shloka 1.
4. ‘Karveer Mahatmya’ (circa 1730 A.D.), Adhyaya 9, Shlokas 40-41.
16. Ibid.
18. Ibid., pp.79-80.
19. Ibid., p.80.
21. Ibid., See also: Malashe, T.P., op.cit., p.2.
(In subsequent centuries, Jain influence on the town grew. In 1886, Campbell, while editing the ‘Gazetteer of Kolhapur’ noted that “the Jains declare that the temple (Mahalaxmi) was a Jain temple dedicated to Padmavati and that the spire and the domes are Brahmaminic additions”, cited: Rajawade, R., loc.cit.5).
22. Ibid., p.3.
23. Ibid., p.7.
27. Census-2001 “Kolhapur District”.
32. Ibid., p.370.
33. Ibid., p.372.
34. Field Survey by the Researcher.