PREFACE

Urbanisation is essential for generating economic growth and social change in any region. It is widely studied by researchers interested in regional development planning. However, most of the earlier studies related to urbanisation in Maharashtra are either for a specific period or on a specific theme; they do not bring out the overall scenario in a spatio-temporal framework. Moreover, all the studies have discussed the scenario only for a period upto 1991 and one finds a lack of any study bringing out the changes in the pattern after introduction of new economic policy as a consequence of globalisation. The present study, therefore, focuses attention on pattern of urbanisation for two census years, viz. 1961 and 2001. The former is the year immediately after the reorganisation of the State in its present form and gives the base line scenario while the latter is the latest year for which data were available and hence the end pattern. This study has been taken up with a view to understanding urbanisation in relation to economic activities, landuse pattern and socio-economic characteristics. In addition, an analysis is carried out for the relative dominance of different metropolitan centres. An attempt is also made to throw light on the spatio-temporal patterns and processes behind it.

Maharashtra is one of the highly urbanised and developed states of India. It has shown a high level of urbanisation compared to India as a whole in all the census years from 1961 to 2001 and its urban population has shown a steady increase over years. While it was ranking first till the census year 1991, it lost its place to Tamilnadu among the major Indian states; in the year 2011 it occupies the third position as it has been surpassed even by Kerala. The level of urbanisation was 42.40% in 2001 and has reached 45.23 in the year 2011; the levels of the states of Tamilnadu and Kerala are only notionally higher. Moreover, in absolute terms, urban population of Maharashtra far exceeds that of both the leading states.
The spatial pattern of urbanisation has not changed significantly over years and large cities continue to dominate. Even though there were attempts to bring about decentralisation through regional measures, the pattern simply got intensified in the vicinity of large centres and along the corridors. The large towns have grown at the cost of small and medium towns suggesting that it is migration rather than emergence of new towns or growth of small and medium towns that is responsible for the high level of urbanisation; this also explains the high absolute number. It is noteworthy that the commercialisation of agriculture does not have any impact on urbanisation and so is the case with cultural factors like literacy.