
CHAPTER - 1

ICHALKARANJI : MANCHESTOR OF MAHARASHTRA

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1. INTRODUCTION :

The present chapter gives out the details regarding location of Ichalkaranji, the development of textile industry and the description of industrial atmosphere.

2. LOCATION OF ICHALKARANJI :

Ichalkaranji is situated on latitude $16^{\circ}-40'$ north and on longitude $74^{\circ}-32'$ east. "Ichalkaranji lies in the Panchganga valley and half a mile north of Panchganga river. The town is said to be formed of seven hamlets". The location of Ichalkaranji in India is shown in figure 1 and Ichalkaranji complex and the Industrial Estate is shown in figure 2.

3. TEXTILE INDUSTRY AT ICHALKARANJI :

The most important change took place in 1892 in the history of Ichalkaranji when its Jahagirdar Narayan Babasaheb was installed on the Gadi (Throne). It is due to his leadership and patronage, Ichalkaranji became an important powerloom weaving centre and later came to be known as "Manchestor of Maharashtra".

Looking at the number of handlooms between the period of 1882-1892, Ichalkaranji was the only place in Kolhapur State which possessed more than 300 looms. The industry expanded during the course of a decade since 1882.

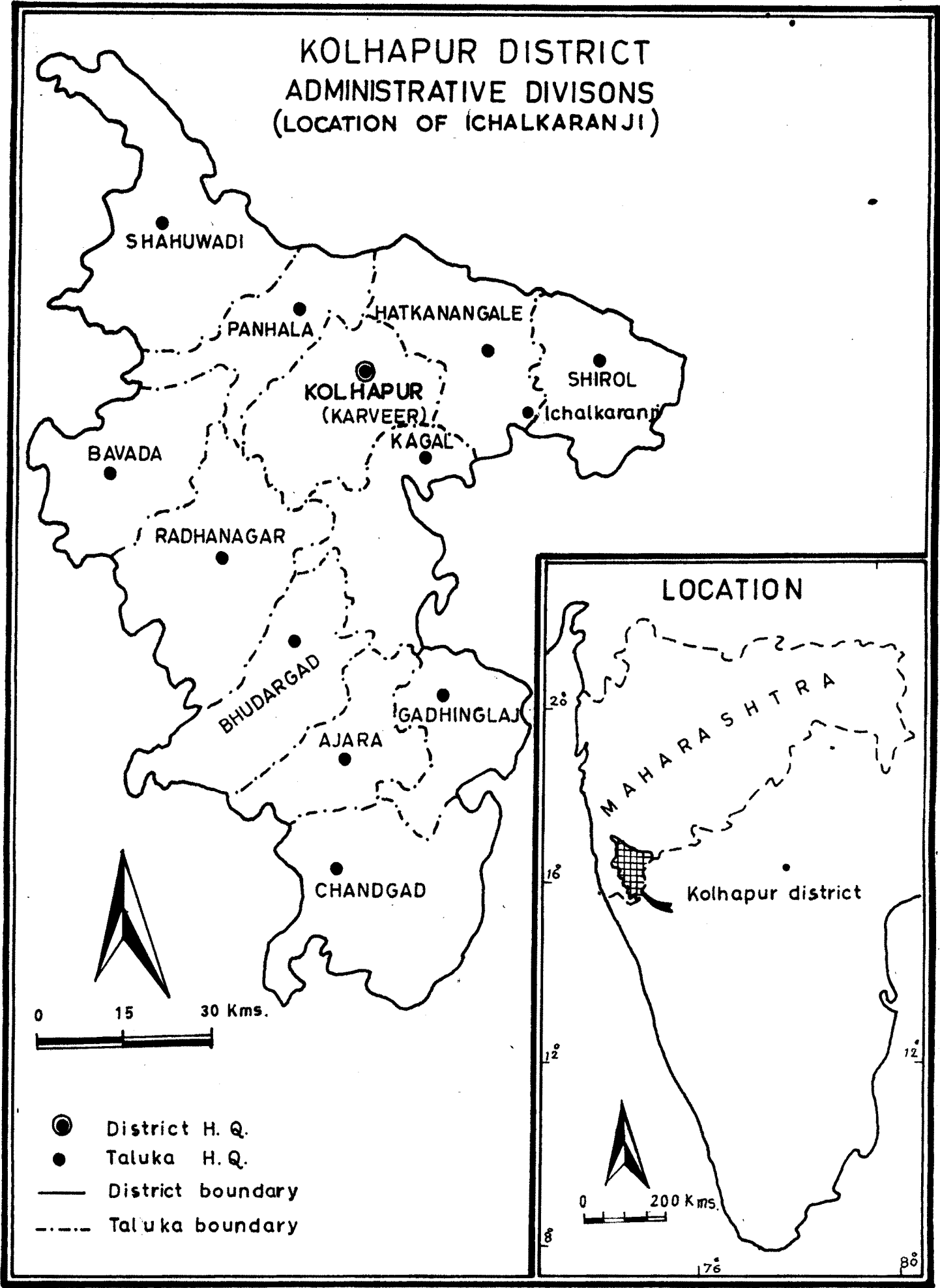


Fig. 1

ICHALKARANJI COMPLEX

- Boundary of the complex
- Municipal limits
- ▨ Residential Developed area
- ▩ Industrial Developed area
- Major district road
- Village road
- ~ River
- +— Railway

PROMINENT LOCATIONS

- 1 Industrial Estate
- 2 Cottage industrial Zone
- 3 Arts. Sc. & Com. College
- 4 S. T. Stand
- 5 ESI Dispensary
- 5a Fuel Instruments & Engineers Pvt. Ltd. (Ichalkaranji)
- 6 Panchaganga Sug. factory
- 7 Deccan Spinning Mill
- 8 Kolhapur district vinkari sahakari Soot girani



The report on Industrial Survey of Kolhapur State, published in 1895 A.D., testifies to this fact by stating that, "the number of looms working on cotton cloth in Ichalkaranji Jahagir had increased from 337 in 1882 to 447 by 1895".¹

Babasaheb Ghorpade, the ruler of Ichalkaranji did assist the industrial development of Ichalkaranji in every possible way. For regulating "Civic affairs a separate Municipal Council was established by him in 1893 A.D."² Further with his full encouragement the powerlooms were installed and grey cloth was produced." The first powerloom factory known as 'Vyanktesh Rangtantu Mills' was started by Vitthalrao Datar in 1908 and is still in operation.

Babasaheb Ghorpade brought some "Koshti" (i.e. weavers) families from outside to Ichalkaranji, allotted lands for their residence-cum-factories and gave them initial financial assistance to produce cloth on handlooms. The experiment met with success and Ichalkaranji was known for its cloth production especially for its 'patagi' and 'Kanaban Sutade'.³

Further Babasaheb Ghorpade frequently advanced money through the treasury to the weavers when they badly required finances for the purpose of keeping their industry running. He did not burden the industry with any taxes but allowed the industry to grow unhampered by any restrictive legislative measures. He gave plots of land for industrial purpose at concessional prices. Thus he gave active encouragement to every enterprising and innovating person.

Moreover, with the support of Babasaheb Ghorpade the first Bank in Ichalkaranji i.e. "The Ichalkaranji Central Co-operative Bank" (Now converted into Ichalkaranji Urban Co-operative Bank) was started in 1929.

The other factors which must be mentioned here in the industrial development of Ichalkaranji are that "Commercial Services like banking and marketing grew up and developed. The Marwari merchants built up a market for powerloom sarees. Labour became familiar with the techniques of industry and in course of time a high standard of workmanship was developed".⁴

In this way "the experience and enterprise of the people the availability of technical know-how relating to powerloom industry rather than the availability of commercial ability or abundance of capital which influenced the location of the industry at Ichalkaranji particularly in its initial stage of growth."⁵

In the initial stage only handloom industry expanded in Ichalkaranji. After 1892, when Babasaheb Ghorpade assended the Gadi, the powerloom industry was started along with handloom industry.

4. INDUSTRIAL ATMOSPHERE AT ICHALKARANJI

While presenting a picture on textile industry at Ichalkaranji, Awachat notes that "Ichalkaranji is a town full of powerlooms. Everything begins to look different from the moment of alighting there from the bus. The roads are crowded with bullock-carts carrying 'beams' back and forth. Beams are made up of a 6 or 7 foot long thick rod with two heavy $2\frac{1}{2}$ foot diameter iron wheels at the two ends. The rod is wrapped around with thread, and that huge-robbin is here designated 'beam', or much more commonly, 'bimbo'. Such full or empty beams, up to 10 at least, are loaded on these busy carts going back and forth on the streets of Ichalkaranji. Even the garbage is thread. In Pune or Bombay one sees slum kids collecting scrap-paper in sacks. Here they

collect scrap of thread. These are small fluff-balls of thread and are called 'gunj'. All the streets are busy, lined on both sides with shops with names like Aparana Textiles, Rajkumar Textiles, Swadeshi Textiles and whole lot of 'Trading Companies'. Most of the shops have just the one room, a bunch of 'beams' before it, the owner inside on the telephone and the 'accountant' at a low desk in the corner, with his head down, writing in his books, all over, whenever one can see, there are huge stacks of a sort of yellowish coloured cloth. In between one comes across a 'Mill stores' that consists of various spare-parts and other odd and ends needed for the repair and maintenance of powerlooms. And small odd shops with hand written signs : looms repaired here so and so, jobber'. The 'Jobber' is a loom-mechanic and one of the most important persons around this town".

After describing the appearance, Awachat analyses the position of textile industry and notes "Just beyond the main road, the scene changes abruptly. The main road has the marble faced buildings of the banks, co-operatives etc. Inside the streets are lined with one-storey, tiled houses. There is continuous noise. From the main road it had seemed like distant rain, distant traffic, but once inside you know what it is. It is a voice of Ichalkaranji. From the richest mansion to the poorest hut every house and building gives off this noise. It is the noise of powerlooms. A continuous noise like rainfall, day and night, all the time. Both the shifts are closed only on Fridays and that's the only time this noise ceases. The atmosphere of the two changes dramatically. Other towns wear a specially cheerful, bustling air on a holiday, Ichalkaranji is dead. The people feel lost on a holiday, they feel something is missing, some

can't sleep; because of the unaccustomed silence. That's Ichalkaranji. A town that lives for and on just one trade".⁶

This is the industrial atmosphere which is very much dominated by the textile industry. On this background, Ichalkaranji has been called as "Manchestor of Maharashtra".

REFERENCES

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University of Poona p. 21.
5. Ibid, p. 22.
6. Awachat Anil, "The Warp and Weft" : Economic and Political Weekly 20th Aug. 1988 p. 1732.